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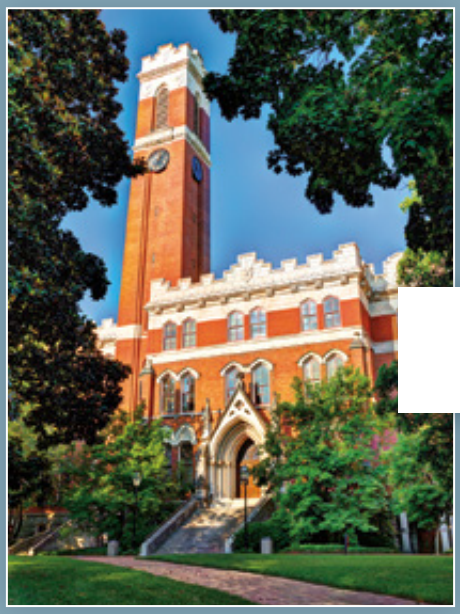

COLLEGE *and* UNIVERSITY

Educating the Modern Higher Education Administration Professional

Targeting Millennials:
Social Media Strategies within Higher Education

Aligning Competencies with Success:
What Does It Take to Be an Effective Admissions Counselor?

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VOLUME 90 ◆ ISSUE NO. 1

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VOLUME **90** ◆ ISSUE NO. **1**

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Founded in 1910, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) is one of the nation's oldest and largest higher education associations. Widely regarded as the leading authority on the emerging field of enrollment management, the association is a recognized source of information on student admissions, academic records, technology solutions and international education.

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Editor's Note

This edition of *College and University* marks a transition. Louise Lonabocker served as editor-in-chief for ten years, completing her tenure this past summer with Volume 89, Issue 4. AACRAO members and *C&U* readers owe Louise a debt of gratitude for her outstanding extended service. I am honored to follow in her footsteps. In her work on behalf of AACRAO she has been a role model for many AACRAO leaders, including myself.

I've had many roles with AACRAO over the years: committee member, inter-association representative to Educause, Annual Meeting program committee member and chair, director of the AACRAO Technology conference, Vice President for Information Technology, President-Elect, President, and Past President. I've also written for *C&U* on occasion. At a time when my service on the board of directors was coming to a close, I had a conversation with Louise about the *C&U* editorial position. She told me that the work was interesting, encouraging me to take it on and offering her support and advice. I'll try hard to live up to her confidence!

College and University has periodically published interviews with leaders in the AACRAO professions. I recently had the pleasure of interviewing Louise, and this article appears in this edition. Among other topics, we discussed changes in student services, the evolution of the "one-stop," new technologies, lifelong learning, leading AACRAO, and travel.

Also in this issue, Whitney L. Sessa reports on a study on the institutional use of social media to communicate with students in her article "Targeting Millennials: Social Media Strategies within Higher Education." In "Aligning Competencies with Admissions Counselor Success: What Does It Take To Be An Effective Admissions Counselor?" Ann M. Gansemer-Topf analyzes the alignment between professional competencies descriptions developed by the American College Personnel Association and the National Association of Student Affairs Administrators and perceptions of early career Admissions Counselors of the competencies required for success in their positions.

In the 1975 book "The Case Against College," Carrie Bird questioned the value of attending college. In "The Case Against College—Revisited," William Beaver addresses the question, "Are we entering a period which will be fundamentally different from the past where the value of a degree will be diminished to the point that fewer you people will go to college?" and concludes with suggestions for actions colleges can take to help students make more informed decisions.

In "Transforming Student Administrative Services: Setting up the One Stop Centre for Students in Nanyang Technological University," Saravanan S/O G. Sathiyaseelan describes the establishment of a comprehensive one-stop student services center, including the challenges and successes.

In "Career Mapping: An Innovation in College Recruitment and Retention," Richard S. Rafes, Shauna L. Malta, and Mary T. Siniscarco review the development of career maps, which link possible careers to occupational areas and academic majors, at Utica College. The maps serve as sources of information for current and potential students and also for high school guidance counselors and college admissions recruiters.

"Understanding Student Veteran Disabilities," by Rodney Parks and Erin Walker, is an excerpt from the AACRAO publication "Helping Veterans Succeed: A Handbook for Higher Education Administrators. Also in this volume, Matthew Fifoit reviews three new books: "Higher Education Accreditation: How It's Changing, Why It Must," "How College Works," and "Presidencies Derailed."

In August, I celebrated my 40th anniversary working in a registrar's office. My first job involved hand-writing transcripts. It was before FERPA, before "enrollment management," before student self-service, and before social media. Our world has changed considerably since then! How does one keep up? Read broadly. Attend conferences. Go to lectures on your campus. Sign up for a webinar. Take a MOOC. Read the articles in *C&U*. Most of all, be curious!

Jeff von Munkwitz-Smith, Ph.D.
Editor-in Chief
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USING A QUANTITATIVE SURVEY METHOD WITH AN ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE AS THE DATA COLLECTION TOOL, THE AUTHOR SURVEYED 189 SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGERS WORKING AT AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO IDENTIFY FORMS OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN USE, ALONG WITH THE MOST POPULAR STRATEGIES THAT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES USE WITH FACEBOOK.

By Whitney L. Sessa

Targeting Millennials

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES *within* HIGHER EDUCATION

TODAY, 100 percent of colleges and universities in the United States use some form of social media (Barnes and Lescault 2011); this number, up from 61 percent only three years prior (Barnes 2009), is a testament to the significant role that social media play in the survival of higher education institutions. Although existing literature suggests that colleges and universities have been quick to adopt social media, questions of how higher education social media managers are using these tools and how they can use them strategically to increase the engagement of current, prospective, and former students linger. With the technology- and social media–dependent Millennial generation on track to be the most educated in U.S. history, and with millions of 20-somethings flooding graduate schools, colleges, and community colleges in part because they cannot find jobs (Pew Research Center 2010), it is crucial that higher education institutions not only use social media but that they use them strategically in order to better engage this generation of students. Increasing the engagement of Millennials is particularly important in light of previous research suggesting that the world's top universities do not provide forums for open dialogue on their Facebook pages, a practice that consequently has silenced the voices of these key stakeholders (McAllister 2011).

This study sought to identify the forms of social media that were the most widely used by higher education institutions in 2012 as well as new forms of social media that are gaining popularity among colleges and universities. With the most current literature on this topic dating back to 2010–11 and the social media landscape quickly evolving from one year to the next, it is imperative to examine this topic annually to observe significant changes in higher education social media use and to pinpoint new forms of social media that are emerging and gaining popularity in higher education marketing efforts. This study also sought

to identify the most popular strategies that higher education institutions are using with regard to Facebook, which 98 percent of colleges and universities reported using in 2011 (Barnes and Lescault 2011). The resulting data also shed light on practical questions, such as what specific purposes Facebook is used for and whether institutional efforts are considered effective.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Millennials—The First "Always Connected" Generation

In 2010, the Pew Research Center estimated that Millennials in the United States numbered approximately 50 million. Members of this generation currently account for the largest cohort of college students in the United States (Hartman and McCambridge 2011). According to the Pew Research Center (2010), the Millennial generation is also on track to be the most educated in American history—the product of a "modern knowledge-based economy" and the enrollment of millions of 20-somethings in graduate schools largely because they can't find jobs (p. 2). Of the eighteen- to 24-year-olds surveyed, nearly 40 percent were enrolled in college as of 2008—a record share (Pew Research Center 2010).

This generation, "the American teens and twenty-somethings who are making the passage into adulthood at the start of a new millennium," is identified as history's first "always-connected" generation, immersed in digital technology and social media (Pew Research Center 2010, p. 1). Three-quarters have created a profile on a social networking site, and one in five has posted a video of him- or herself online. According to the Pew Research Center (2010), "They treat their multi-tasking, hand-held gadgets almost like a body part—for better and worse. More than eight in ten say they sleep with a cell phone glowing by the bed, poised to disgorge texts, phone calls, e-mails, songs, news, video games, and wake-up jingles" (p. 1). As "leading technology enthusiasts" (p. 25), Millennials surpass older Americans in virtually all types of Internet and cell use (Pew Research Center 2010). They utilize technology and social media as sources of information, as "an ecosystem for their social lives," and as a "badge of generational identity," thus distinguishing their generation from others (p. 25). They are more likely to have social networking profiles, to connect wirelessly to the Internet, and to post videos of themselves online (Pew Research Center 2010).

Social Media Adoption and Usage in U.S. Higher Education

According to a study conducted by the Center for Marketing Research at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth in 2010–11, 100 percent of colleges and universities studied used some form of social media—up from 61 percent three years prior (Barnes 2009). As part of a longitudinal study dating back to 2007–08, Barnes and Lescault (2011) examined the adoption of social media by U.S. colleges and universities. Using an online directory compiled by the University of Texas at Austin, Barnes and Lescault (2011) conducted 456 interviews with individuals who manage social media at four-year accredited higher education institutions. Each year, the results have continued to support the finding that colleges and universities use social media—particularly social networking sites—to recruit and research prospective students. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, blogging, and podcasting were the most widely used social media tools by U.S. higher education institutions; all of these media realized double-digit increases in institutional usage in 2010–11 (Barnes and Lescault 2011). Facebook was the most commonly used, with 98 percent of colleges and universities having reported having a Facebook page (up from 87 percent the previous year). Eighty-four percent reported having a school Twitter account (up from 59 percent), and 66 percent reported maintaining a blog (up from 51 percent). Forty-four percent reported using podcasting—nearly a 50 percent increase from the previous year. Use of the professional site LinkedIn also showed an increase among admissions professionals, 47 percent of whom reported that they use the networking site (up from sixteen percent).

Social Media Functions in Higher Education Settings

Research has identified three primary functions of social media within higher education settings: locating information about students, recruiting students, and monitoring "buzz" about their respective institutions (Barnes 2009, Barnes and Lescault 2011, Kaplan Test Prep 2011). According to a 2009 paper issued by the National Association for College Admission Counseling (Barnes 2009), one-fourth of colleges surveyed indicated that they use social

networking or Web searches to locate information about prospective students. Kaplan Test Prep's 2011 survey of college admissions officers also reports that nearly a quarter (24%) of respondents from the schools surveyed have visited an applicant's Facebook or other social networking page to learn more about them, with 20 percent reporting that they have Googled them. Similarly, Barnes and Lescault (2011) found that a significant proportion of schools continue to research students via search engines (13%) and social networks (19%).

NACAC findings (Barnes 2009) also indicate that colleges use social media for promotion and student recruiting purposes, with 88 percent of admission officers believing that social media were either "somewhat" or "very" important to future recruitment efforts. Kaplan Test Prep (2011) also reports that college admissions officers use social media for outreach purposes, with Facebook and YouTube serving as important recruiting tools. Kaplan Test Prep (2011) reports that 85 percent of college admissions officers surveyed use Facebook (up from 82 percent in its 2010 survey) and 66 percent use YouTube (up from 52 percent) to attract prospective students. Students are able to take virtual campus tours, learn about academic programs, and access admission statistics via social media.

The NACAC report (Barnes 2009) notes that more than half (53%) of colleges monitor social media for "buzz" about their institution, with a majority of colleges maintaining a social media presence via blogs, social networking Web sites, message or bulletin boards, video blogging, and podcasting. In 2011, Barnes and Lescault reported that 68 percent of schools (down from 73 percent in 2009) reported that they monitor the Internet for buzz, posts, conversations, and news about their institutions. Although research identifying the specific functions of Facebook within higher education is limited, McAllister (2011) suggests that the primary target audience of higher education Facebook pages is prospective students and that the primary functions of such pages are to generate return visits and conserve visit time.

Best Practices and Strategies for Social Media in Higher Education

In a 2009 report entitled "Reaching the Wired Generation: How Social Media Is Changing College Admission," Nora Ganim Barnes highlights the best practices for higher education social networking. These include: utilizing video to deliver information and attract attention; utilizing a streamlined and consistent design that reflects school colors, themes, layouts, etc.; linking social networking sites through a school's homepage and vice versa; soliciting input and content from a variety of sources—*e.g.*, faculty, staff, and students—so that multiple viewpoints are represented; posting accomplishments such as student awards, performances, community service, travel abroad, etc.; allowing visitors to interact with the page by utilizing animation, games, message boards, giveaways, etc.; tracking site visitors using web metrics or counters; and updating the site frequently with new content. Barnes (2009) also references best blogging practices that she recommends higher education institutions incorporate into their social networking (as, for example, on Facebook, which, though not classified as a blog, does allow users to utilize blog-like "posted items" or "notes") (Barnes 2009, p. 26). Although implemented differently, these features are also used to provide information about a school. Barnes notes that best practices for higher education blogging include: being prepared to devote time to the effort; creating a blog plan; treating the blog as a conversation; being transparent, authentic, and interesting; growing and developing the blog; remembering the "basics" of blogging; and remembering the human factor.

When examining strategies related to the management of social media in higher education, Barnes and Lescault (2011) found that the most common managers of a school's blog were the admissions office and the marketing and public relations departments. At schools with multiple blogs, the blogs were managed by their respective departments. Barnes and Lescault (2011) note, interestingly, that it is not uncommon for social media managers to be unfamiliar with various blog platforms, such as WordPress and Blogger, because at most institutions, the IT department is responsible for creating the blog so it can be managed by others. Barnes and Lescault (2011) do not report the most common managers for other popular social media tools (*e.g.*, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube).

Perceived Success of Social Media in Higher Education

In 2011, Barnes and Lescault reported that when asked how successful social media tools have been for their respective schools, respondents "consistently raved" (p. 7) about their

experiences, particularly with regard to Facebook (95 percent reported success) and YouTube (92 percent reported success). In fact, a high degree of success was reported for every tool studied. Also in 2011, McAllister examined how the world's top universities use Facebook as an interactive forum and whether they give a voice to key stakeholders (*e.g.*, current students, prospective students, and international students) and found that "the world's top universities do not provide forums for open dialogue" and that "the interactive potential of the Internet is being vastly underutilized" (p. 326). Although approximately half of the Facebook pages studied had active message boards (49%) and active walls (54%), only sixteen percent of the Facebook pages offered links to addresses where users could submit comments, and only fifteen percent offered users opportunities to post and respond to discussions and wall messages. McAllister (2011) reported that 85 percent of the universities studied utilize their Facebook pages for one-way communication messages. "Sadly, the voices of key stakeholders are being silenced via a media that is intended to provide forums for open dialogue" (p. 326).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Although the most current literature shows that 100 percent of colleges and universities use some form of social media (Barnes and Lescault 2011), it does not specifically address the intended purposes for which they are using social media or *how* they are using it. It is also worth noting that the most "current" research dates to 2010–11; given the rapid evolution of the social media landscape from one year to the next, it seems necessary to identify the most popular social media in usage *today* while also identifying newer social media that are being used. In addition to identifying which social media colleges and universities are using as part of their daily marketing efforts, it is important to ask what strategies are being used relative to Facebook—the most widely used social network in higher education—and whether they are considered effective.

This study was guided by the following questions:

- What are the most popular social media used by American higher education institutions in 2012?
- Since 2010–11, what new social media have emerged as popular social media tools?
- For what specific purposes are American higher education institutions using Facebook?
- What are the most popular strategies that higher education social media managers are using with Facebook?
- Are Facebook efforts found to be effective?

METHOD

The research method was a quantitative survey using an online questionnaire (developed through the Web-based program Survey Monkey) as the data collection tool. The study was cross-sectional, allowing each participating school to complete the survey one time during the approximately one-month period during which the survey was open. The research population was social media managers employed by higher education institutions in the United States. Using an online directory of four-year accredited U.S. higher education institutions created by the University of Texas at Austin (The University of Texas at Austin 2014), the author selected a systematic sample of 864 schools from a population of 1,727 colleges and universities. The skip interval was adjusted to result in a sample of approximately 50 percent of schools listed in the directory. The author located the email address of each institution's designated social media manager by either visiting the school's Web site or contacting the school directly via phone, e-mail, or the school's Facebook account. The author ultimately obtained the appropriate contact information for 353 schools.

Of the 189 higher education institutions that completed the survey, 34 percent identified themselves as being located in the midwestern United States, 29 percent in the southern United States, 23 percent in the northeastern United States, and fourteen percent in the western United States. Twenty-six percent identified as public and 74 percent as private institutions. Most classified themselves as universities (50%) or colleges (28%); far fewer classified themselves as religious/faith-based (12%), technical/special focus (3%), community colleges (2%), tribal (1%), or other (5%). Schools' enrollments ranged from 30 students to 427,000; the mean enrollment was 9,429.

A mass e-mail containing a link to the online questionnaire was sent to each school for which the author was able to obtain a valid email for the school's social media contact. Two mass e-mail reminders were sent to all participants, with the first sent a week after the initial invitation and the second sent a week after the first reminder. The online sur-

vey remained open for a four-week period and featured both open- and closed-ended questions, including fill in the blank; multiple choice; multiple response; and five-point Likert scale. For the purposes of the study, a "primary" Facebook presence was defined as the primary Facebook group, page, or profile designated by an institution to represent its official presence on Facebook (*e.g.*, the University of Florida Facebook Page); a "secondary" Facebook presence was defined as any page, group, or profile created by an institution to represent a facet of the college or university, such as a specific institutional school, department, team, club, mascot, etc. (*e.g.*, the University of Florida Admissions Facebook Page). Statistical tests of the data included frequencies and descriptives.

RESULTS

Social Media Usage in Higher Education

One hundred percent of survey respondents reported that their institution uses Facebook (*see* Table 1). The second most popular social media tool was Twitter (used by 97 percent of respondents), followed closely by YouTube (used by 91 percent of survey respondents). LinkedIn and Four Square were less popular, used by 61 percent and 31 percent of survey respondents, respectively. Myspace was used by only three percent of survey respondents. Thirty-nine percent also reported using an "other" form of social media—the most popular being Pinterest, Flickr, Google+, Vimeo, Tumblr, Instagram, and Zinch. Pinterest was the most popular "other" form of social media used, with 43 percent of survey respondents using it, followed by 35 percent for Flickr, 28 percent for Google+, eleven percent for Vimeo, ten percent for Tumblr, five percent for Instagram, and four percent for Zinch (*see* Table 2).

Table 1.
Social Media Used

Social Media Used	Count	Valid N %
Facebook	189	100.0
Twitter	177	97.3
YouTube	166	91.2
LinkedIn	111	61.0
Other	71	39.0
Four Square	56	30.8
Myspace	5	2.7
None	0	0

Table 2.
"Other" Forms of Social Media

"Other" Social Media	Count	Valid N %
Pinterest	32	43.2
Flickr	26	35.1
Google+	21	28.4
Vimeo	8	10.8
Tumblr	7	9.5
Instagram	4	5.4
Zinch	3	4.1
USTREAM	1	1.4
Blogger	1	1.4
SCVNGR	1	1.4
WordPress	1	1.4
Yelp	1	1.4
Yammer	1	1.4
Picasa	1	1.4
Bambuser	1	1.4
Delicious	1	1.4
SmugMug	1	1.4

Purposes of Facebook

When asked for what specific purposes schools were using Facebook, nearly all respondents (98%) reported that they use it to communicate general information about the institutional community (*see* Table 3, on page 8). Other popular uses included communicating with alumni (91%);

Table 3.
Purposes of Facebook

Purposes of Facebook	Count	Valid N %	Total N %
Communication General Information	181	98.4	95.8
Communicate with Alumni	167	90.8	88.4
Marketing Purposes	166	90.2	87.8
Recruit Students	164	89.1	86.8
Media Relations	111	60.3	58.7
Crisis Communications	97	52.7	51.3
Examine Blogosphere	72	39.1	38.1
Orientation	55	29.9	29.1
Locate Information About Students	27	14.7	14.3
Other	18	9.8	9.5

Table 4.
Number of Official Facebook Presences Utilized

N Valid	184
N Missing	5
Mean	23.7663
Mode	10.00
Minimum	1.00
Maximum	250.00

Table 5.
Types of Presences

Type of Presence Utilized	Count	Valid N %	Total N %
Pages	179	97.3	94.7
Groups	122	66.3	64.6
Profiles	55	29.9	29.1

general marketing purposes (90%); and recruiting students (89%). More than half of respondents (60%) reported that they utilize it for media relations purposes and crisis communications (53%). About a third of respondent schools (39%) use Facebook to examine the blogosphere—that is, to keep abreast of what is being said about their school—and for orientation purposes (30%). Only fifteen percent of survey respondents reported using Facebook to locate information about students.

Facebook Strategies in Higher Education

Overview

Survey respondents reported having anywhere from one to 250 Facebook presences (the mean was 24 and the mode ten). Nearly all (97%) used pages as a type of presence, and approximately two-thirds (66%) used groups. Fewer than a third (30%) used profiles (*see* Table 4). Official Facebook presences created by survey respondents, in order from most to least popular, included: university-specific (99%); department-/school-specific (67%); athletics-specific (64%); admissions-specific (51%); class of 201* (46%); and other (32%) (*see* Table 5).

Management

The vast majority of respondents (77%) reported that the communications/marketing department was responsible for managing the institution's primary Facebook presence (see Table 6). Eleven percent reported that the admissions department was responsible for the primary presence, and nine percent reported that an "other" department not listed was responsible. Only two percent of respondents reported that the student affairs department was

the main manager, and only one percent reported that the information technology department had this responsibility.

Promoting the Presence

The most popular methods of social media promotion reported by survey respondents were: a link on their institution's website (96%); e-mail (75%); and print materials (73%) (*see* Table 7). Approximately 50 percent of respondents reported that they promote their primary presence in person, and fewer than 25 percent reported that they use ads within Facebook. Approximately two percent reported that they do not promote their social media presence.

Posts

Most survey respondents reported that they post to their primary Facebook presence either once a day (40%) or multiple times a day (38%) (*see* Table 8, on page 10). A smaller proportion of respondents reported posting weekly (20%), and fewer than 1 percent post only monthly.

Table 6.

Official Presences Created by School

Official Presences Created by Your School	Count	Valid N %	Total N %
University-Specific	182	98.9	96.3
Department or School-Specific	124	67.4	65.6
Athletics-Specific	117	63.6	61.9
Admissions-Specific	94	51.1	49.7
Class of-Specific	84	45.7	44.4
Other	59	32.1	31.2

Table 7.

Department Responsible for Managing Primary Facebook Presence

	Count	Valid N %	Total N %
Valid			
Communications/Marketing	142	77.2	75.1
Admissions	20	10.9	10.6
Missing Total			
Other	16	8.7	8.5
Student Affairs	4	2.2	2.1
Information Technology	2	1.1	1.1
Total	*184*	*100.0*	*97.4*
9.00	*5*		*2.6*
	189		*100.0*

Effectiveness/Value of Facebook Efforts

Seventy percent of survey respondents reported that they measure the effectiveness of their Facebook efforts in some way. When asked how effective Facebook is in recruiting prospective students, nearly 50 percent of respondents reported that it is somewhat effective, and 23 percent reported that it is very effective (*see* Table 9, on page 10). When asked how effective Facebook is in achieving their institution's marketing/enrollment goals, 38 percent of respondents reported it to be "somewhat effective," and 31 percent reported it to be "very effective" (*see* Table 10, on page 10).

DISCUSSION

The findings of the current study support Barnes and Lescault's finding (2011) that 100 percent of U.S. colleges and universities use some form of social media. The results of the present study also support previous findings (Barnes and Lescault 2011) that Facebook is the most commonly used social media among U.S. higher education institutions. Whereas previous research reported that 98 percent of colleges and universities had a Facebook page (Barnes

Table 8.

Department Responsible for Managing Secondary Presence(s)

	Count	Valid N %	Total N %
Valid			
Each Department Manages its Own	119	64.7	63.0
Communications/Marketing	22	12.0	11.6
Admissions	18	9.8	9.5
Missing Total			
Other	17	9.2	9.0
Student Affairs	6	3.3	3.2
Office of the President	2	1.1	1.1
Total	*184*	*100.0*	*97.4*
9.00	*5*		*2.6*
	189		*100.0*

Table 9.

Number of Individuals Responsible for Managing Primary Facebook Presence

N Valid	183
N Missing	6
Mean	3.2678
Mode	1.00
Minimum	1.00
Maximum	94.00

Table 10.

Description of Main Manager

	Count	Valid N %	Total N %
Valid			
Junior-Level Staff Member	64	35.0	33.9
Missing Total			
Senior-Level Staff Member	60	32.8	31.7
Dedicated Social Media Manager	39	21.3	20.6
Other	14	7.7	7.4
Student/intern/Work study	4	2.2	2.1
Faculty member	2	1.1	1.1
Total	*183*	*100.0*	*96.8*
9.00	*6*		*3.2*
	189		*100.0*

and Lescault 2011), the present study found that Facebook usage has increased such that 100 percent of U.S. colleges and universities now use the social networking site. Furthermore, this supported Barnes and Lescault's (2011) finding that Twitter and YouTube are the next two most widely used social media sites by higher education institutions, however, the present study found that these social media sites are being used by larger percentages of schools than previously reported. (It is worth noting, however, that Barnes and Lescault [2011] surveyed college admissions offices whereas this study surveyed social media managers employed by higher education institutions; this could help account for the apparent differences in social media usage). The author also found that 39 percent of respondents reported using an "other" form of social media, with Pinterest, Flickr, Google+, Vimeo, Tumblr, Instagram, and Zinch being the most popular. These are new key players in the social media scene in higher education.

Although previous research (Barnes 2009,

Kaplan Test Prep 2011) reported that nearly a quarter of colleges and universities use social media to locate information about students, the present study found that only fifteen percent of survey respondents use Facebook for this purpose; nearly all, however, reported that they use Facebook to communicate with their publics, to recruit potential students, and for marketing purposes. The majority of schools responded that Facebook was either "somewhat effective" or "very effective" in recruiting prospective students and pursuing institutional marketing/enrollment goals.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Because social media are managed by different departments at different schools—and often by more than one department—locating the contact information for a school's primary social media manager proved difficult; in fact, many institutions do not have a designated social media manager but rather many individuals with responsibility for maintaining the college or university's primary social media presence. A second limitation of this study was the provision of communication only in English (e-blasts and the survey were written in English); this proved problematic when communicating with schools where the primary language is not English. Suggestions for future research include surveying members of the Millennial generation to identify the most popular forms of social media they utilize during the college search process, during college, and thereafter. This study should also be repeated for other forms of social media (*e.g.*, Twitter and YouTube) widely used by higher education institutions in order to identify the most popular strategies social media managers are utilizing across a range of platforms.

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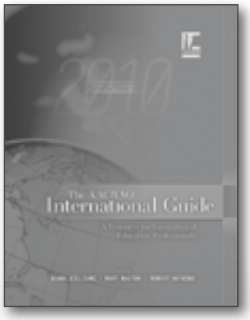
A Item #9019



B Item #0129

C Item #9018

D Item #9026

E Item #6538

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Ⓕ THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

A study of the educational system of the People's Republic of China, from preschool to higher education. Includes information on entrance examinations, vocational education, and a thorough guide to the academic placement of students in educational institutions in the United States.

Item #6536 $85 nonmembers | $60 members (2000)

INDIA

A study of the educational system of India, including the different types of universities, computer and management education, and a detailed list of professional associations in India. Also includes guidelines to the academic placement of students in educational institutions in the United States.

Item #5342 $85 nonmembers | $60 members (1998)

Ⓖ KYRGYZSTAN

The Educational System of Kyrgyzstan describes the current educational structure of Kyrgyzstan and serves as a guide to the academic placement of students in educational institutions in the United States. This monograph contains information on both secondary and higher education, grading scales and a directory of post-secondary institutions in Kyrgyzstan. It also covers transitional issues, fraud and academic corruption.

Item #9020 $45 nonmembers | $30 members (2003)

Ⓗ PHILIPPINES

A study of the educational system of the Philippines from basic to higher education, with information on academic and vocational degrees, and non-traditional education, including Islamic education. Serves as a valuable guide to the academic placement of students in educational institutions in the United States, with information on accrediting agencies and professional education associations in the Philippines.

Item #6537 $85 nonmembers | $60 members (2001)

ROMANIA

A study of the educational system of Romania. Includes an extensive list of sample diplomas, and detailed guidelines for admissions officers in the academic placement of students in educational institutions in the United States.

Item #5339 $75 nonmembers | $50 members (1998)

TAIWAN

An extensive guide to the structure and content of the educational system of Taiwan, from kindergarten through graduate and professional studies. Includes detailed information about schools recognized and not recognized by the Ministry of Education, a vital guide for any admissions officer considering incoming students from Taiwan.

Item #6539 $95 nonmembers | $70 members (2004)

Ⓘ THAILAND

A study of the educational system of Thailand and guide to the academic placement of students in educational institutions in the United States. Covers preschool education onwards, with a particular emphasis on higher education studies, including degrees and teaching methods. Includes information about teacher training, technical and vocational educational and health studies.

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Item #9027 $95 nonmembers | $70 members (2006)

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Ⓕ Item #6536

Ⓖ Item #9020

Ⓗ Item #6537

Ⓘ Item #5341

Ⓙ Item #9027

Aligning COMPETENCIES WITH SUCCESS

What Does It Take to Be an Effective Admissions Counselor

The admissions counselor position is a common entry-level professional position in higher education. However, little is known about the competencies needed to be successful in this position. Through interviews with entry-level admissions counselors, this study sought to better understand these competencies and their alignment with the recently created ACPA/NASPA Student Affairs competencies. Results and implications for practice are discussed.

By Ann M. Gansemer-Topf,
Kasie Von Haden, and Elyse Peggar

The position of admissions counselor provides an accessible professional gateway into higher education and student affairs. In a survey completed by 104 mid- and senior-level student affairs professionals, admissions positions were most frequently identified as representing "typical entry-level jobs" (Burkard *et al.* 2005, 290). These positions, because of the work experience and professional training provided, are seen as beneficial first positions for new undergraduate and master's degree recipients.

In 2010, the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Affairs Administrators (NASPA), the leading student affairs organizations, jointly published "Professional Competencies in Student Affairs." The document outlines ten competencies of student affairs professionals as well as sets of basic, intermediate, and advanced knowledge and skills supporting each competency. The ten competencies are:

- advising and helping;
- assessment, evaluation, and research;
- equity, diversity, and inclusion;
- ethical professional practice;
- history, philosophy, and values;
- human and organizational resources;
- law, policy, and governance;
- leadership,
- personal foundations;
- student learning and development.

The ACPA/NASPA document outlined skills believed to be important for effective work in student affairs. However, little research has been done to assess the alignment of these competencies with the actual work of student affairs professionals.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

Although admissions counselor is a common first professional position, few formal assessments have been conducted to identify the skills needed to be successful in this position. This study sought to understand the competencies needed to be a successful admissions counselor by interviewing admissions counselors early in their careers. Specifically, this study sought to explore the alignment between the NASPA/ACPA professional competencies and those described by entry-level admissions counselors. Soliciting the perspective of individuals relatively new to the field is important because they are best able to accurately describe the competencies required to be effective admission counselors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Admissions counselor positions vary according to institutional type, but most require promoting their institution to prospective students and their families, giving presentations, conducting administrative tasks, and collaborating with faculty and other staff members (National Association for College Admission Counseling n.d.). Admissions counselors work with students on critical issues related to college access, affordability, and the transition to college. Traditionally, admissions offices have reported to student affairs or academic affairs divisions (Dungy 2003, Kuk 2009), but the current trend is for admissions offices to be assigned to a larger enrollment management division. This division may also include financial aid, the registrar's office, orientation, and retention services and may report to student affairs, the provost, or the president (Bontrager 2004a, Vander Schee 2007). These different reporting structures reflect the variety of work in which admissions officers engage. Although they work closely with students, admissions professionals also need to understand business and marketing principles and to be knowledgeable about student financial aid and institutional policies, practices,

and resources (Bontrager 2004b, Hossler and Kalsbeek 2008, Hu 2012, Kalsbeek and Hossler 2009).

Although much has been written regarding the skills admissions counselors need, little research has examined these competencies from the perspective of individuals currently in entry-level positions. The ACPA/NASPA competencies were written by senior-level student affairs administrators and graduate preparation program faculty. And although each such individual provides a valuable perspective, none may have had any experience working in admissions or have had direct contact with entry-level professionals in admissions counselor positions.

Several studies have investigated the professional competencies required of new student affairs professionals. Hoffman and Bresciani (2012) reviewed more than 1,700 student affairs job descriptions to understand which competencies such positions require. Admissions positions represented only 2.6 percent of the job descriptions that were reviewed. Both Renn and Hodges' (2007) pilot study of ten new professionals and Renn and Jessup-Anger's (2008) year-long study of 90 new professionals provide suggestions for improving graduate education in order to meet the needs of new professionals. These suggestions are useful, but no entry-level admissions professionals participated in the studies. In order to understand the competencies learned in a graduate program and the extent to which the competencies were used in their first professional position, Waple (2006) surveyed entry-level professionals who had completed a master's degree in student affairs. (It is not clear that admissions professionals were included in this study.) In contrast, the present study expands previous research on student affairs competencies by focusing specifically on admissions positions. Information regarding the competencies needed to be an effective admissions counselor could support admissions professionals' hiring, supervising, and training.

Admissions office positions are common gateways into the student affairs profession and are critical for institutional viability. As institutions rely increasingly on tuition to meet operating expenses (College Board 2012), admissions offices are under increased pressure to meet enrollment goals. Even more broadly, some of the most significant challenges confronting higher education today—access, affordability, and retention—are addressed and influenced by policies and practices of admissions offices (Davenport, Martinez-Saenz and Rhine 2012) and are carried out by entry-level admissions professionals. What are the skills and competencies needed to be an effective admissions counselor?

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a purposeful criterion sampling technique (Miles and Huberman 1994) and was granted Institutional Review Board approval prior to seeking participants. Participants were solicited through e-mails and listservs via the National Association for College Admissions Counseling (NACAC), the Iowa Association for College Admissions Counseling (Iowa ACAC), the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), and personal connections in admissions offices across the country. Participants ultimately included sixteen admissions counselors who had been in their position for between six months and three years.

Although many admissions counselor positions require only a bachelor's degree (NACAC n.d.), this study focuses in part on those who had earned a master's degree in student affairs or a related area. Data can be used to inform new professionals—regardless of their degree—but focusing on those who had earned a master's degree provided the opportunity to examine the impact of graduate school preparation. Participants who had earned bachelor's degrees were also able to describe the competencies and skills needed, as well as preparation for the field that occurred outside of a graduate program.

Interview Protocol

Participants were interviewed in person or via telephone. Interviews lasted between 20 and 30 minutes and focused on participants' perceptions of the competencies and skills needed for their position; their level of preparedness for their position based on their previous experiences; and their suggestions for improvement.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through topical individual interviews (Rubin and Rubin 2012). Individual interviews were selected as the appropriate method because, as Rubin and Rubin (2012) state, "[T]hrough such interviews researchers explore in detail the experiences, motives, and opinions of others and learn to see the world from their perspec-

tive" (p. 3). Interviews were conducted between June and November 2013 and were audiotaped and transcribed.

A non-standardized interview technique (Denzin 1978) was utilized: A list of prescribed questions preceded follow-up questions asked by the interviewer. Inductive coding procedures (Seidman 1998) were used to review each transcript separately and to code the data into specific categories.

RESULTS

Sixteen participants were interviewed for this study. Participants represented a variety of institutional sizes and types, from large, public research institutions (five), to mid-size comprehensive (one), to small, private, liberal arts universities (ten). One individual worked at a women-only college, and three others worked at religiously affiliated institutions.

One participant had a master's degree in sociology, two had master's degrees in higher education, and three were working toward their master's degrees in higher education or student affairs. The remaining ten participants held bachelor's degrees from a variety of disciplines.

Competencies

When asked which skills/competencies were needed to be successful in their roles, admissions counselors highlighted several of the ACPA/NASPA competencies: student learning and development; equity, diversity, and inclusion; advising and helping; assessment, evaluation and research; and law, policy, and governance.

Student Learning and Development

The competency of student learning and development was deemed necessary particularly by those professionals who had completed or who were in the process of completing a master's degree in student affairs. These participants said that coursework in student development had helped prepare them for their role in admissions. One participant did not mention student learning specifically but recognized the importance of helping students see a "fit" between their needs and what the institution had to offer: "...to make sure they live comfortably to have that personal and intellectual growth."

This participant perceived student development to be part of his role as an admissions counselor: he worked with students not only to meet their needs but also to encourage them to seek personal and intellectual growth during college.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Admissions counselors also identified diversity and working with a wide variety of people as a competency that is needed to be successful. Being able to converse with and provide resources for diverse others—as, for example, from different socioeconomic levels, different races and ethnicities, different geographic areas, and other varying demographics—enables admissions counselors to meet the needs of all of those with whom they work. Equity, diversity, and inclusion also play a significant role in admissions and higher education access, as described by this participant who serves on a diversity committee:

> *I think it particularly sparked my interest in diversity issues within admissions and issues of access and seeing the kind of privilege that our students bring with them when they come here and some of the less privileged students and how that affects their time here at [institution]. So now I'm very conscious of those issues when I'm communicating and recruiting and in my efforts in recruiting new students....*

Being skilled in the equity, diversity, and inclusion competency, then, enables admissions counselors to have one-on-one conversations with diverse others and also to consider higher education access and diversity issues within a larger context. Several interviews also featured discussion of diversity and recruitment issues. A significant aspect of admissions counselors' availability is recruitment; having an understanding of equity, diversity, and inclusion may aid in being able to recruit specific, targeted student populations.

Advising and Helping

"I feel like a counselor" was a common statement. Although admissions counselors may be perceived by some as institutional "salespersons," many identified more closely with an advisor or helper. For participants, this included being able to help students determine "fit":

> *I would say that I really push more toward the counseling side of things. One thing I'm very aware of or very cautious about is that I never assume that the*

> *student is for sure coming to [institution]. Because this is, once again, about helping the student find the educational fit that's right for them [sic].*

Helping and advising play a significant role not only in terms of admissions counselors' conduct but also in students' perceptions of counselors. One participant said, "I know a few students... are trying to utilize me too much as a life coach and more than an admissions counselor." Having appropriate helping and advising skills—*e.g.*, attentive listening skills and being able to refer students to resources (which many admissions counselors already do as part of their jobs,)—was cited as another core competency (though it was not necessarily named).

Assessment, Evaluation, and Research

Admissions counselors discussed reading or analyzing data, presenting data, and conducting research on various aspects of their roles. Participants who had earned master's degrees said that having taken a research- or assessment-related course was beneficial:

> *[W]hat was incredibly helpful was taking evaluation and some statistics and quantitative analysis courses. That's so much of the job in admissions now, and...planning my travel—taking all of my high school data and then determining which schools I want to visit—that is a skill I learned by default by being in grad school. And now, whenever we have a survey in our office, they ask me to analyze it because I've had experience [analyzing surveys].*

Other participants who had earned master's degrees shared similar experiences and were able to tie their learning in graduate school directly to their current responsibilities. Participants who had only earned bachelor's degrees did not mention assessment, evaluation, and research as often; they perceived expertise in these areas as "value added." In fact, participants with skills in these areas were

subsequently given additional opportunities to expand their roles as admissions counselors.

Law, Policy, and Governance

Participants said that they came to understand "the politics of the school" and "the politics of working for a state university" through their work. However, one participant specified that she had learned "where the funding comes from—how it's all doled out and that process" through a master's in higher education course.

Knowing "the difference between public and private schools" was another area participants believed to be important, particularly in talking with students and their families about their decisions about college and in understanding higher education in general. One participant also mentioned that it was important to be knowledgeable about certain aspects of law, policy, and governance: "[H]aving a sense of the laws and policies that guide admissions and related practices helps ensure that you're not doing something that's illegal."

Additional Traits

In addition to competencies, many participants also spoke of personality traits or qualities they believed were necessary to be successful admissions counselors. The traits they described fell into three categories: organization, communication, and interpersonal skills.

Organization

Many participants described organizational skills as crucial, particularly given the demands of travel, event planning, and other required tasks and responsibilities. Being organized was a critical skill. One admission counselor said:

> *[F]irst and foremost, good organization and good planning skills [are necessary]. I found those to be of the utmost importance this past year, and I'm sure I will again as I look forward to fall travel, admitted students day, and my work as coordinator for the intern program. Making sure you have thought of both the broad picture and the minute details is so important in the kind of work that we do, and especially in terms of [work-related] responsibilities.*

Many participants were involved in significant amounts of travel to high schools and college fairs. One participant said, "You have to be organized; you have to be on top of the amount of schools you're visiting in a day, when the college fairs are coming up, and how you approach this travel."

In addition to being organized—particularly as it relates to event planning—admissions counselors reported that time management and balancing and prioritizing responsibilities were crucial skills:

Time management is another [crucial skill], especially during the travel season when we are on the road so much—balancing the fairs and the visits to the different high schools and the events and just being able to coordinate those and ensure that all of that is taken care of effectively while also balancing the needs of what's going on in the office, even when you are on the road—email, phone calls, and other projects as well....

Communication

Communication, in the form of individual as well as small-group conversations and small- and large-group presentations, was a competency admissions counselors deemed necessary. Counselors said, "Communication overall is really important" and "Conversational skills are very important because all you do is talk." Counselors speak with students, family members, high school guidance counselors, and colleagues from other institutions as well as their own. For their individual interactions to be successful, admissions counselors rely on their ability to communicate clearly, to be articulate, and to be professional.

In addition to representing their institutions in individual conversations, admissions counselors do so through presentations during campus and high school visits and college fairs:

> *[P]ublic speaking [is important]. [W]hen we go on the road, we have to have a very professional demeanor and be able to communicate clearly and efficiently, especially at some of our larger fairs and larger presentations.*

Participants emphasized the importance of confidence, as well, as they had to be able to "share data in a way that is interesting, profound, and fun." In addition, they had to "adjust to the audience" and provide information in an effective way for different numbers and types of students and family members.

Interpersonal Skills

Many counselors discussed the role of interpersonal skills, particularly in conversations and interactions with prospective students. As when they adjust their presentation styles and interact with various audiences, admissions counselors rely on their interpersonal skills when they interact with different groups. One participant described her interpersonal skills as "being able to listen and work with different groups, and especially working with diverse groups and understanding what the needs are of each person."

Others said that admissions counselors' interpersonal skills take the form of being a "people person," being relatable, having empathy for people and their situations, and "genuinely car[ing] about human beings." Several counselors emphasized customer service skills and common courtesy as being important in working with students and their families.

DISCUSSION

Of the ten ACPA/NASPA professional competencies, half were identified by entry-level admissions counselors as being necessary for success in their position. Five (ethical professional practice; history, philosophy, and values; human and organizational resources; leadership; and personal foundations) were not mentioned specifically, though participants alluded to their importance.

Tenets of the leadership competency—as, for example, being a contributing staff member and working as a member of a team—were also mentioned. Supervising and training students to give campus tours, being able to resolve conflict, and using resources appropriately were responsibilities admissions counselors cited as relating to the human and organizational resources competency.

"Personal foundations" describes some of the intrinsic values admissions counselors require for the work they do; they include being self-motivated and -directed and being willing to sacrifice personal time for travel. History, philosophy, and values were also cited, primarily in participants' discussion of the counselor versus salesperson approach to admissions counseling. And finally, ethical and professional practice was captured in participants' discussion of professionalism within their roles, especially with regard to representing their institutions.

The results of this study have implications for admissions offices. As mentioned earlier, although the admissions counselor position is a gateway into the student affairs profession, little research has been conducted regarding this role. In addition, little research has been done to examine the extent to which the ACPA/NASPA competencies are relevant to the work of admissions counselors. Participant responses suggest that many of the competencies are critical for successful work in the admissions office. However, in addition to these competencies, specific traits such as organization and interpersonal skills were mentioned consistently across participant interviews.

This finding is consistent with the U.S. Department of Education's (2002) competency model, which identifies specific traits needed for a profession (*e.g.*, student affairs), the competencies that are the culmination of various knowledge and skills, and the application of the competencies. The results of this study illustrate a similar trend: While competencies are necessary, other traits, such as organization, communication, and interpersonal skills, provide a foundation on which to build professional skills; without this foundation, other competencies may not be useful.

By identifying traits and competencies necessary for admissions counselors to be successful, the results of this study can be used to inform the hiring and supervision of entry-level admissions counselors. Rather than viewing admissions counselors solely as "recruiters" or "salespersons," this study helps to articulate the skills and competencies these entry-level professionals must possess to be successful. In addition, the results of this study can be used to inform new professionals about the work that will be required of them, to illustrate the skills and competencies they will gain from the position, and to create professional development opportunities to enhance and strengthen the work of admissions counselors.

Results of this study also have implications for the ACPA/NAPSA competencies and for graduate study in student affairs. Participants with and without master's degrees identified competencies, adding credibility and validity to the list of ACPA/NASPA competencies. The understanding that derives from the competencies contributes to the work of admissions counselors during their first few years on the job and plays a role throughout their long-term professional development.

However, the study also highlights the importance of graduate work in student affairs. Several participants

who had obtained master's degrees in student affairs cited coursework in areas such as student development, assessment, and research that had assisted them in their role as an admissions counselor. A master's degree is not required for many admissions positions, but being able to conduct assessments, advise students, and understand the broader context of higher education policies and law can provide counselors who have earned master's degrees with a significant advantage.

LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study provides insight into admissions counselors' experiences and their perspective as to which competencies are needed to be successful, it does have limitations. As a result, several areas of future research can be recommended.

Because this study was qualitative, participants' experiences and the findings from the data analysis are not generalizable to all admissions counselors. Due to the small sample size of this study, it cannot be assumed that all or even most admissions counselors are prepared for their roles in the same way this study's participants seem to have been. As cited in this study, the competencies and skills that are necessary for admissions counselors to be successful can help us understand how to best prepare admissions counselors for the field. But more work is needed to fully understand the nuances of these competencies. For example, other factors, such as social identities, the role of supervisors, institutional type, and involvement in professional development opportunities, could also influence admissions counselors' preparedness (as could other experiences not focused on by this study). It is also important to note that participants chose to share their experiences; self-reported data should be analyzed and approached with caution.

The amount of time participants had spent in their current roles is also an area for future research. Although the purpose of this study was to focus on admissions professionals who had spent between six months and three years in their roles, the competencies needed to be a successful admissions counselor may change over time. Future research could help us understand what skills are needed and how they are learned from colleagues who have been in the field for longer periods of time.

This study focused on new professionals' perspectives; future research could incorporate the views of mid- and senior-level professionals. Insights from these more seasoned professionals who are also responsible for hiring and training new professionals would add significantly to the research on admissions counselors' competencies.

Despite these limitations, this study provides insight into the competencies needed to be a successful admissions counselor. Professionals who have worked in admissions offices typically understand the tasks needed to be successful, but little empirical evidence exists to document these competencies. Further research focused on reporting lines and competency areas could help clarify how admissions counselors perceive themselves and what skills they require in order to be successful.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the competencies and skills admissions counselors need in order to be successful within their first three years in the position. Interviews of 16 admissions counselors from across the country and at different types of institutions made it clear that organization, communication, and interpersonal skills are the primary skills needed. Components of all of the student affairs competencies were also mentioned, as were some job responsibilities and roles. Understanding which competencies are most important to admissions counselors' professional success can help ensure that the preparation and training of admissions counselors—whether in master's degree programs or through on-the-job-training—are as effective as possible. After all, it is these professionals who represent their institutions, recruit students, and provide access to higher education.

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THE CASE

AGAIN$T COLLEGE

REVISITED

By William Beaver

THE FACT that nearly one-half of recent college graduates are unemployed or underemployed has once again raised questions about the value of a college degree. This article will attempt to answer these questions by analyzing such issues as labor markets, student debt, human capital along with examining the less apparent aspects of degrees and conclude that college is still worth it. However, colleges need to make students more aware of the realities of the situation by providing information about employment opportunities by major, student loan debt, and job placement rates.

For nearly four decades, the value of a college education has been questioned. For instance, in 1975, *The Case against College* argued that higher education was little more than a "nursing home for young people" and that the degrees students earned had little relevance to the actual jobs they would get. Moreover, students were accruing significant debt to pay for degrees that were not worth their cost (Bird 1975). In retrospect, such pronouncements were premature.

According to the U.S. Census, individuals who have bachelor's degrees will earn approximately $1 million more throughout their working lives than will those who have only completed high school. This figure certainly suggests that college is "worth it," and it is the primary reason that two-thirds of high school graduates pursue higher education. That nearly one-half of recent college graduates are under-employed or unemployed is attributed to the recession and its aftermath; the situation is expected to improve eventually. Nonetheless, these dismal statistics have again raised questions about the value of a four-year degree. President Obama expressed concern when he announced plans to implement a rating system that will take into account the percentage of students graduating from a college, the amount of debt incurred, and the graduates' salaries (Shear 2014). Perhaps the question which needs to be asked is whether we are entering a period that will be fundamentally different from the past. Will the value of a degree decrease to the point at which fewer young people will go to college? In an effort to provide some answers, this article examines such things as labor markets, student debt, human capital, and alternatives to the current higher education system. Finally, it suggests actions that colleges could take on behalf of students—actions that would enable students to make more informed decisions.

LABOR MARKETS

The vast majority of students attend college so they can obtain a good job. UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute (2013) finds that this goal has become increasingly important over the years. In 2012, 87.9 percent of college freshmen at 283 four-year schools indicated that a very important reason for going to college was "to be able to get a better job"; in 1976, only 67.8 percent responded accordingly. And because only ten to twelve percent of newly minted graduates go directly to graduate or professional school, the rest will be seeking that "better job."

Yet labor market projections by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) are not encouraging: The labor force is expected to expand 6.8 percent by 2020, compared to 7.9 percent between 2000 and 2010. The BLS describes this as "slow growth." In addition, more baby-boomers (individuals born between 1946 and 1964) will continue to work more years before retiring. Currently, 19.5 percent of the labor force comprises individuals ages 55 years and older; by 2020, that figure is predicted to increase to 25.2 percent. Of course, baby-boomers' decision to postpone retirement is not good news for recent college graduates, who may not find many high-quality jobs available if older workers continue to work (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2012).

Even more discouraging is the BLS projection that of the twenty occupations providing the largest number of job openings over the next few years, only three will require a four-year degree: nursing (18) (some programs) as well as general (19) and operations managers (20); the other seventeen occupations—including nurse's aides, home health care assistants, and janitors—don't require a bachelor's degree. Much the same picture emerges regarding the twenty occupations that will experience the fastest growth: Only three (information security analyst, interpreter-translator, and petroleum engineer) require a four-year degree while several others (including genetic counselors, physician's assistants, and surgeons) require graduate-level or professional training; the remaining occupations do not require a four-year degree (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2013). Of course, these are only projections. But if they are at all accurate, the labor market for college graduates during the next decade will leave much to be desired.

STUDENT DEBT

Approximately 70 percent of students take out loans to help pay for college. The guaranteed student loan program, which dates to 1965, has been one of the most successful government initiatives of the post–World War II era. It has allowed millions of individuals to complete their degrees and establish successful careers. Unfortunately, in recent years, the increasing levels of debt incurred by student borrowers have become a major concern. Of course, student debt relates directly to the amount colleges charge. According to the College Board (2014), total charges at public, nonprofit higher education institutions averaged $18,431 for the 2013–14 academic year; the comparable charge at private nonprofit institutions was $40,917. The National Center for Education Statistics (2013) reports that between 2001 and 2012, and after adjusting for inflation, costs increased 40 percent at public institutions and 28 percent at private institutions. Rising tuition, along with higher enrollments, has increased the student loan debt to $1.1 trillion, up from $300 billion a decade ago, and now is exceeded only by home mortgage debt. Some observers believe that student debt is beginning to have a detrimental impact on the economy. The Federal Reserve Bank of New York found that for the first time in more than a decade, 30-year-olds with student debt were less likely to take out home mortgages than were those without student debt (Kitroeff 2014). Nobel Prize–winning economist Joseph Stiglitz referred to the increasing debt as "an education crisis that is affecting our potential future growth" (Kitroeff 2014).

In 2012, the average student loan debt was $29,400. Student loans typically require that repayment begin six to nine months after graduation, which makes securing adequate employment an urgent matter. The situation is even more dire for students who drop out: they are responsible for their loans but are far less likely than college graduates to find satisfactory employment. A 2010 law caps repayments at 10 percent of a borrower's monthly income, and President Obama recently expanded the law so it applies to more students who take out loans (Calmes 2014). These changes were made in response to the mounting evidence that recent graduates are having difficulty making their loan payments. An estimated 35 percent of borrowers younger than 30 years of age are 90 or more days delinquent on their payments. And unlike other types of debt, student loans cannot be forgiven by declaring bankruptcy. Congressional Democrats and the Obama administration support legislation that would allow student borrowers to refinance their loans at lower interest rates. However, to make up for the loss of government revenue, some tax loopholes on higher incomes would be eliminated; Republicans' opposition to such changes makes it unlikely that such legislation will ever become law (Douglas 2014).

Another outcome of high levels of student debt coupled with the tight labor market is that more college students are moving back in with their parents after graduation. According to the Pew Research Center (Fry 2013), 36 per-

cent of persons between the ages of eighteen and 31 years of age are living with their parents (reportedly an all-time high); the number of college-educated young persons living at home increased 61 percent between 2001 and 2011. It is little surprise that these "boomerang graduates" tend to postpone marriage, purchase fewer goods, and have fewer children (Fry 2013).

The irony, of course, is that for many years, graduating from college signified the beginning of adulthood and financial independence. Consider the frustration of many graduates who have conformed to the socially prescribed means of success only to find themselves living in their parents' homes with less than adequate jobs and trying to make loan payments they cannot afford.

HUMAN CAPITAL

The common perception is that young people attend college in order to acquire knowledge and skills. This is known as the human capital model. Learning makes students more attractive in the marketplace, enabling them to obtain good-quality employment. But in recent years, numerous articles and books have claimed that students in fact do not learn much during college. Arum and Roska's *Academically Adrift* (2011) is based on the scores of a sample of students who were administered the College Level Assessment (CLA), which measures such skills as critical thinking, problem solving, reasoning, and writing. Arum and Roska (2011) found that 45 percent of the students whose scores they studied made no significant gains in any of these areas during their first two years of college. Neither does it appear that college students are learning a great deal in their major areas of study. Each year, hundreds of colleges require graduating seniors to take the Major Field Tests, designed by the Educational Testing Service to measure student knowledge by college major. On average, students correctly answer slightly more than half of the questions, indicating that although some learning takes place, it is not substantial (Beaver 2009).

Yet the grades students receive would indicate otherwise: The average GPA of college graduates is approximately 3.2, up from 2.5 in the 1950s. Perhaps the higher grades would be more understandable if students were spending more hours studying, but the opposite is true. The number of hours per week spent studying has decreased consistently over the years: Whereas students studied an average of 24 hours per week in 1961, they studied only fourteen hours per week in 2010. These decreases were not merely at "lesser" institutions but across all institutions (Babcock and Marks 2011). Bauerlein (2008), after reviewing data from the National Survey of Student Engagement, concluded that two-thirds of first-year students studied fewer than two hours a day, and the numbers weren't much different for upperclassmen. The bottom line is that the typical college student acquires some human capital, but grade inflation lessens the incentive to try to acquire more.

THE LATENT FUNCTIONS OF DEGREES

A case against college can be made on the basis of labor market projections, student debt, and acquired human capital, to say nothing of cost. Yet such a judgment would be hasty given that there are functions of degrees that are not always readily apparent but that add greatly to their value. For example, degrees often serve as screening and sorting devices, simplifying the hiring process. Employers often receive many more applications for a job than they can reasonably advance to the interview stage, and one way of making the process more manageable is to consider only those applicants who have four-year degrees. In this scenario, which is fairly common, non-degree-holders, however able, have little chance of being hired.

This raises the following question: Why, beyond simplifying the hiring process, do employers give preference to applicants who have earned a college degree? One answer is that so many applicants with college degrees are seeking employment. Consider that one-third of U.S. citizens between the ages of 25 and 34 years have a four-year degree. Why should an employer consider hiring a high school graduate when she could just as easily hire a college graduate? In addition, employers have gradually increased the educational requirements for any number of positions, even though in many cases the actual requirements of the job are essentially unchanged (Livingstone 1998).

Researchers at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York report that 44 percent of recent college graduates are under-employed, which is defined as working in an occupation that does not typically require a bachelor's degree (Abel *et al.* 2014). While these graduates at least have some form of employment, they are displacing the high school graduates who held the jobs previously and are forcing them (albeit unintentionally) into even lower-paying jobs.

(Never mind that the college graduates may feel frustrated because of being under-employed.) In essence, then, the relative value of a college degree increases even though its absolute value may not; at the very least, a college degree contributes to the increasing pay gap between college and high school graduates—a gap that currently amounts to approximately $17,000 for young adults.

Another reason that employers give preference to college graduates is that degrees confer status on those who hold them. Brown (1995) traces this phenomenon to the rise of large, complex organizations during the late 1800s, when individuals with college degrees became more highly valued because they were believed to possess the cognitive abilities required to run such organizations. As the years passed, it became accepted that college graduates had superior cognitive skills (this may or may not be the case). In fairness, various studies have indicated that college can enhance students' cognitive ability. Consider that in the Arum and Roska study (2011), which was hardly complimentary of higher education, a majority of college students did demonstrate some increases in their cognitive skills. That said, a larger methodological problem precludes discovery of the actual effects of college: Most capable high school graduates enroll in college. Thus, there is no control group of equally capable young persons who do *not* attend college. Nevertheless, Autor (2014) argues that the increasing pay gap between high school and college graduates is the result largely of college graduates' superior cognitive skills and of society's movement away from physical and toward cognitive labor.

As a result, the economy will need more college graduates in the coming years, not fewer. The difficult employment market recent graduates face can be explained by a glut of degree holders entering the marketplace between 2004 and 2012. Presumably, this circumstance will not last. Not all economists agree with this assessment, and Autor's (2014) research raises other pertinent issues. For example, what about the significant number of college students who show little or no gain in their cognitive abilities? How valuable are they to the economy? Perhaps these are the individuals who end up taking jobs held previously by high school graduates. Research also indicates that not all college majors are equal in terms of potential income and employment opportunities. Carnevale *et al.* (2013) found a large wage advantage for so-called STEM workers—those who major in science, technology, engineering, and math. Consider that STEM graduates with a four-year degree earn 50 percent more over the course of a lifetime than do their peers who major in the humanities; and 63 percent of STEM workers with an associate degree earn more than non-STEM workers with bachelor's degrees. Together, these facts suggest that humanities graduates, in addition to earning lower wages, also are more likely to be under-employed. Hence, the assertion that society will need more individuals with college degrees may be true in some—but probably not in all—cases.

ALTERNATIVES

A number of alternatives to college have been proposed by those who question its benefits. For example, Murray (2008) urges that the four-year degree be replaced by a certification system similar to the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) exam. The CPA exam is a standardized test used to determine competence (indicated by a passing score) in the various areas of accounting. According to Murray's scenario (2008), a passing score would become the determining factor in obtaining employment. Whether or not an individual had earned a college degree would be largely irrelevant. Murray (2008) believes that all disciplines should develop such exams and employability should be based on an individuals' exam scores.

Inevitably, any system will be characterized by strengths and weaknesses. An obvious strength would be that a valid exam could provide employers with more specific information about an applicant's knowledge and skills rather than requiring that they assume that an individual who majored in a given subject possesses those knowledge and skills. But it is one thing to develop exams in skill-based areas, such as accounting or computer programming, but quite another to do so in areas that are not based on the acquisition of specific skills. Beyond testing, another salient issue is how individuals would acquire the knowledge and skills required to pass the exams, particularly given that one of Murray's assumptions is that for most students, college is a waste of time. Perhaps the more gifted or motivated could teach themselves, but other strategies would need to emerge for the rest.

An apprenticeship system similar to the German model has been lauded for some years in this country but has seldom been utilized outside of the skilled trades.

An apprenticeship typically lasts between three and four years, during which time the apprentice not only works for a business, gaining practical experience, but also attends classes designed to impart job-related knowledge and skills. Apprentices may also be required to pass an exam to verify their competence. Although apprenticeships usually are associated with blue-collar jobs, they also could be used to prepare young people for mid-level and higher skilled jobs in such fields as information technology, health care, and other service industries. One of the advantages of such a system is that it costs the apprentice very little, if anything. In fact, the employer typically pays the apprentice for work performed and also pays the costs of tuition. The likelihood of future employment is high because companies typically sponsor apprentices in response to identified workplace needs. Of course, costs are a significant issue because there is no guarantee that an apprentice will complete his program or continue to work for the company that sponsored him. In Germany, substantial government subsidies offset employers' costs. There is little doubt that something similar would prove necessary in the United States in order for apprenticeships to become more commonplace (Labi 2012).

Apart from cost, there are other obstacles to apprenticeships; none is more signifcant than social expectations. In contemporary U.S. society, a college education is practically an expectation. Parents want and expect their children to attend college, and young people are socialized accordingly. In addition, young people tend to look down on their peers who do not plan to pursue higher education (Schneider 2013). The primary reason for this is that college degrees confer status whereas other alternatives, at least at present, do not. Until they do, their use will be limited at least in part because their value will not be considered equivalent or a substitute for a four-year degree.

WHAT COLLEGES CAN DO

The lack of viable alternatives to four-year degrees coupled with the less than apparent functions of degrees suggest that college, despite the negatives, is still "worth it." However, the value of a degree may decrease in time. Part of the reason for this is that there are simply more of them. (The United States is second only to Norway in the percentage of citizens with college degrees, at 32 percent.) Conversely, because so many people in the United States have college degrees, those who lack one will be penalized even more keeping in mind the plight of the high school graduate in terms of lifetime earnings and employment opportunities. In this sense, a four-year degree could be viewed as a long-term insurance policy.

The state of the economy in years to come will further impact the value of college. A few economists predict that the economy will revive, benefiting college graduates, while others believe that less-than-favorable trends (more in line with government projections) will continue. Indeed, Beaudry *et al.* (2014) believe that unless there are technological advances similar to those of the 1980s and 1990s, job growth will remain weak.

Regardless of what the future holds, colleges can help students and parents make better decisions by providing crucial information. First, students should be advised about employment opportunities and earnings potential for each of the various academic majors institutions offer. Such data are readily available, and students need to know that a college major is highly predictive of their chances of securing meaningful employment and future earnings. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that all colleges would comply voluntarily with such a requirement, if only because of fear that enrollments might decrease in those majors in which the job outlook is less than optimal.

Another meaningful change pertains to student loans, with regard to which more clarity is needed. Too often, loans are presented along with grants and scholarships as part of a student's financial aid package. Such bundling can obscure the long-term financial impact of loans. To counter this practice, institutions should make students acutely aware that loans must be repaid and that payments come due whether or not the student graduates. Students also need to know what their payments are likely to be and that student loans cannot be cleared by bankruptcy.

Finally, more accurate information about job placement rates must be made available. Many prospective students are attracted to a particular school at least in part on the basis of its job placement record. Some institutions claim that the vast majority of recent graduates are employed but fail to distinguish between those who have jobs related to their undergraduate major and those who have positions that do not require a degree. Use of a standardized form could significantly improve the situation: as advocated by the National Association of Colleges and Employers,

all colleges and universities would complete the form and make it publicly available. The form would specify how many students were contacted about employment, how many replied, and what percentage were working in fields related to their major (Endly 2014). The U.S. Department of Education is attempting to require colleges to provide such information. And given the Obama administration's concerns about the state of higher education, it is not out of the question that colleges also will be required to more clearly inform students about loans as well as future employment opportunities and salaries.

CONCLUSIONS

Considering all the factors involved, it is understandable why the decision to attend college might be increasingly difficult. Yet, on balance, earning a four-year degree still makes sense, even though the value of such a degree may decrease over time. Degrees nevertheless provide advantages (some of which are not readily apparent). Until there are socially accepted alternatives, a four-year degree will continue to be necessary to obtain good-quality employment. Unfortunately, under-employment will continue to be a problem not only for college degree holders but also for high school graduates, whose earnings likely will continue to decrease. Finally, students need to be made aware of economic realities. Higher education should provide clear information about employment opportunities and student debt; doing so would truly serve its customers.

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interview

Louise Lon

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WHAT HAVE YOU OBSERVED AS THE BIGGEST CHANGES IN THE REGISTRAR/STUDENT SERVICES FIELD DURING YOUR CAREER?

Unimaginable changes in productivity. I came of age with typewriters and computer card decks. Word processers came along in time for me to write my dissertation. My first desktop computer was delivered in the early 1980s. Since then it's been a dizzying array of cellphones and smartphones, laptops and tablets, self-service and ecommerce, document management and ERPs, videos and social media, email and voicemail, mobile apps and Google docs. You get the idea. We're busier, more productive, and more responsive. We're online all the time, and we're expected to be. I've found I need downtime in the evening. I typically disconnect by 6:00 p.m., go for a walk, watch an hour or two of TV, and hopefully get a good night's sleep.

Linked to productivity is the growth of information technology. Information Technology was a small group located in the basement of a nearby building in the 1980s. They are now a large organization of close to 200 staff members, occupying the entire wing of a building and other locations. The same applies to Advancement, which has its own new building, and to a lesser extent Student Affairs including Health Services. Athletics has grown in size and complexity, Campus Police keeps us safe on a

By Jeffrey von Munkwitz-Smith

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campus that borders a major city, and new offices such as risk management, government and community relations, and environmental health and safety have emerged. I'm sure the list will continue to grow.

I've witnessed the evolution of data-driven decision making. I've always loved data and the stories it tells. I'm currently tracking freshman registration results to see and identify new trends. For many years, I've prepared an Enrollment Highlights sheet after the fall census data that notes enrollment, the largest majors and minors, depicts our geographical distribution and diversity, and captures new enrollment trends. For example, in fall 2013 enrollment in organic chemistry was the highest recorded, and a 35 percent increase since 2010. In addition, the number of students enrolled in elementary or intermediate German was its largest enrollment since 1998, and an increase of 40 percent since 2011. The findings are often included in other university publications, and we begin to receive requests for this two-page piece well before the semester even begins. We also track our contacts via email, telephone, and in person. We track historical data for electronic payments, student financial aid, payment plan participation, loan volume, default rates, event attendance, cross-registration, transcript requests, reports produced, exams scanned, and much more. Accurate and reliable data is invaluable and supports requests for staffing, course offerings, or policy changes more readily than anecdotes or opinion.

The university has a database to assist us in tracking our compliance obligations. We have a list of at least 25 for student services ranging across HEOA notices and disclosures, gainful employment, state authorization, credit hour compliance, voter registration, NCAA certification, FERPA, and financial aid packaging and awarding. We track the reporting requirements, deadlines, agencies, responsible staff members, penalties, and risks. It's a sobering undertaking especially when you're dealing with

the potential loss of Title IV funding, NCAA fines and sanctions, or IRS penalties.

Boston College is a traditional face-to-face institution, but I've been following developments related to prior-learning assessment and competency-based education. I was pleased to see AACRAO's new publication on this subject, ordered it, and learned about methods of assessment, quality assurance, student academic records, the relationship to the credit hour, financial aid considerations, and student progress toward the degree. If the topic surfaces here at some point, I'm glad to have a trusted resource for reference. In the meantime, I'll continue to follow the progress made at nearby institutions like Southern New Hampshire University's College for America.

In the last decade we've spent more time conducting assessments of just about everything! We conduct online course evaluations, advisor evaluations, and occasional student surveys of our own organization. We've asked parents to evaluate our services, we've held focus groups in preparation for systems and services, we participate in national surveys, and we prepare data for *U.S. News & World Report* and other media outlets.

Workplace flexibility was not in our vocabulary until recent years, but I've come to appreciate it because of the impact on staff satisfaction, productivity, and retention. For many years, financial aid staff members had one or two reading days at home when they were reviewing, packaging, and awarding financial aid for entering or returning students. Eventually other staff members who were able to do so asked to work from home for one day each week including business analysts, information specialists, and communication experts. We distinguish reading at home from working at home. Staff *reading* at home may normally work without interruptions. Staff *working* from home are expected to maintain normal working hours from 9 to 5 and take telephone calls, participate in meetings, and answer emails. Some staff members for family or commuting reasons have requested 8 to 4 or 10 to 6 in-person shifts and we accommodate those whenever we can. Three staff members have relocated to other parts of the country with their spouses, and because of the nature of their work in communications, financial aid, or information services, they work remotely full-time with occasional visits to campus. This requires focus, discipline, and comfort with telepresence. It's an adjustment for everyone, and has contributed to greater use of telephone conferences, Skype calls, or Google chats. As we've achieved a greater level of comfort with remote exchanges, it has translated to more virtual meetings within the institution. We have also come to understand that staff working remotely are able to focus on tasks that require concentration such as writing, data analysis, and project management, and we have shifted some responsibilities accordingly. We track location, schedules, and telephone contact information on an office absence calendar. Questions of fairness are sometimes raised because staff members responsible for customer service are unable to work from home. The same applies to managers and directors, though some may work from home on occasion to prepare a report or concentrate on a project. But all jobs are not equal, and we have decided to allow flexibility wherever possible. I believe we have benefitted from the reduction in commuting time, the ability to focus on projects and communications, and the appreciation of staff who continue in their chosen career from a remote location. And on the rare occasion of a snow day, it's business as usual for the majority of the staff who are accustomed to working at home.

Currently I'm fascinated by what's going on in the cloud. Let's talk more about that later.

IN "LEADERSHIP LESSONS FOR NEW PROFESSIONALS" YOU WROTE ABOUT YOUR ENTRY INTO THE REGISTRAR/STUDENT SERVICES FIELD. AS IS THE CASE WITH MANY OF US, IT WAS A LITTLE BIT ACCIDENTAL. WHEN/HOW DID YOU KNOW THAT IT WAS WHERE YOU WANTED TO MAKE A CAREER?

After two years of working in the corporate world in western Massachusetts, I moved to Boston and first sought similar employment in the city. After two or three interviews, I felt it wasn't a great fit for me. I had always been interested in working in higher education so I got on the B line, which as you know is Boston's subway known as the T. I stopped at Boston University, asked several people where the human resources office was located, and no one seemed to know. I decided to get back on the B line and try Boston College. There I found the human resources office immediately, took a typing test, was immediately sent for an interview in the office of undergraduate admission, and received an offer of employment the following week. Although the salary was less than it would have been in the city, it felt right to me. I've never regretted that decision. I enjoy coming to work every day.

I spent six years in the office of undergraduate admission before moving to the office of the registrar. Fifteen years ago we created a one-stop office of student services, and I've enjoyed the opportunity it presented to consolidate and enhance services for students and families. I work with a terrific group of people who are always collaborating and consulting with each other to make the student enrollment process as seamless as possible. We look for ways to continually improve our processes with systems, communications, and outreach.

I've always enjoyed reading professional journals and publications about higher education, and even when I was on the AACRAO Board, I made it a point to attend as many sessions as possible at the annual meeting, state or regional meetings, or other related conferences. I'm a regular at AACRAO conferences, and every few years I enjoy attending the EDUCAUSE annual meeting as well as the College Board Forum. The sessions, networking, and publications produced by these associations have helped me maintain currency in the profession and in higher education.

YOU'VE BEEN ONE OF MY ROLE MODELS, PARTICULARLY IN YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN AACRAO, AND YOU'VE WRITTEN ABOUT THINGS YOU LEARNED FROM YOUR OWN MENTORS. WHO WERE YOUR MENTORS AND ROLE MODELS?

And I've thought of you as one of my role models, especially when it comes to technology. I've enjoyed our talks about student systems or new technologies over the years at conferences, via email, and here in Boston. I'm so glad we're neighbors now!

Over the years there have been countless colleagues both at the university and within AACRAO who have served as mentors and from whom I learned about leadership and organization, budget and finance, ethics and values, speaking and writing, regulatory compliance, data security, social justice, expressing gratitude, and standards and practices. I'll single out some professionals with whom I was very fortunate to work during my formative years.

I worked with Jack Maguire, Boston College's first Dean of Enrollment Management, and one of the founding fathers of enrollment management. Jack was an assistant professor of physics who brought data-driven decision making into the admission office. At the time, it was a breakthrough. Jack never went anywhere without a pile of slides filled with data about applicants, admits, geographical distributions, yield, demographics, and other data points that seem intuitive now but were not at the time. I started my career in undergraduate admission, eventually overseeing transfer admission before moving to the registrar's office. I worked in Jack's organization for over ten years and reported to him when I was promoted to the university registrar position. Jack taught me to recruit and hire outstanding staff members, give them responsibility, provide support and resources, hold them accountable, and let them do their work.

Bernie Gleason was our CIO in the 1980s, and he taught me the value of broad, sweeping change. At the time we made use of ATM technology to provide self-service to students well before self-service using computers and voice-response technology became common practice. We received more inquiries and were invited to make more presentations about that ATM technology than any other initiatives we've undertaken since that time. The funny thing about it was that we had many visitors from other institutions who asked to come and see the technology in action. It was an ATM machine without a cash dispensing unit. There wasn't a lot to see. But we welcomed visitors and let them watch as students walked up to the machine and printed out their course schedule, student account activity, or financial aid award.

I had a wonderful female role model, Marie McHugh, our senior associate dean in the College of Arts and Sciences. She was balanced, organized, effective, reliable, honest, and respected by all. She's been retired for fifteen years and we continue to stay in touch and visit at least once a year. Within AACRAO, Jan Doehlert, associate registrar at Georgetown University, preceded me on the Board of Directors and encouraged me to participate on committees and task forces and eventually serve on the Board. We first worked together on the AACRAO Task Force for the 1990s and our paths crossed frequently from that point on. We also enjoyed sharing some travel experiences including visits to stately homes, gardens, and historic sites.

I have to thank my parents for speaking French to me as a child. We always went back and forth from French to English, often in the same sentence. As a result, I've never minded interruptions and can easily go from one task to another and then jump back and pick up where I left off. We also played cards and board games often, and I think that helped me develop my ability to look at a report or

spreadsheet and quickly distill the important elements. My cousin and I maintain that tradition. We like to play mah jongg when we get together. We'll do that on the porch of the Red Lion Inn in Stockbridge next weekend, one of our favorite spots for card playing and people watching. Finally, my parents always provided plenty of reading material from comic books to Nancy Drew to young adult fiction. We went to the library regularly. I'm an avid reader.

BOSTON COLLEGE WAS AN EARLY ADOPTER OF THE "ONE-STOP" STUDENT SERVICES MODEL, AND YOU WERE DEEPLY INVOLVED IN THAT TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE. MORE THAN FIFTEEN YEARS ON, IT'S OBVIOUSLY BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL! WERE THERE SOME EARLY CHALLENGES? WHAT'S NEXT FOR THAT MODEL?

Our model was driven by an executive initiative to provide better customer service, operate more efficiently and effectively, and reduce costs. As a result we did not involve as many staff members who were within the organization as we probably should have. I witnessed more buy-in at other institutions that had involved the majority of current staff members in the planning process.

The early challenges included the consolidation of cultures that typically had not intersected to any great degree including academic and financial services. On the academic side, we had always interacted often with faculty and welcomed informal contacts with them. This was not a natural for staff in financial services but now all have come to appreciate the hard work of our faculty colleagues. Another challenge involved the fact that many staff were now responsible for general service and processing support that included all functional areas, which led to greater breadth of responsibility and less depth of knowledge. Some welcomed this while others preferred being experts in one field, like financial aid. At the time the economy was strong and staff members who were not comfortable with the new arrangement were able to obtain jobs elsewhere. We had high turnover for the first two years. After that, everyone who remained wanted to be part of the new organization, and new staff applied because they liked the service-oriented model.

Over the years student services staff members have come to learn more about each other's roles and responsibilities, always with the goal of improving service for students and families. For example, we work together to prepare a comprehensive Welcome Packet for new students. Financial services staff are actively involved in commencement activities. When other institutions talk about the challenges of getting everyone to collaborate prior to the implementation of a new student system, we are fortunate to be able to skip that step and move directly to developing requirements. We already have a good understanding of the intersections of our work and the importance of collaboration. This will benefit us as we continue to implement the Kuali student system.

From the outset of our planning for a one-stop model, I realized there was no one size fits all. The pioneers including the University of Delaware, Carnegie Mellon University, and Fordham University were helpful to us as we prepared our model. While the University of Delaware had consolidated all general service in one building, Carnegie Mellon University brought everyone together into one comprehensive office. Boston College's model is very similar to Carnegie Mellon's. I remember visiting you at the University of Connecticut and seeing the one-stop service center and student services building that was designed for optimal student service. That model was different from ours, and it worked well for the University of Connecticut. I continue to hear from or host visits from colleagues at other institutions interested in developing one-stop services. Although they still focus on customer service, they are now mindful of retention, student success, and student completions, and they include offices such as career services, advising, and learning resources into their models. I'm sure the patterns will continue to evolve and change. It's interesting to watch.

AS LONG AS I'VE KNOWN YOU, YOU'VE BEEN INVOLVED IN THE APPLICATION OF TECHNOLOGY TO STUDENT SERVICES, AND YOU'VE BEEN AN ADVOCATE FOR IMPROVING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE THROUGH THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING EDITING A BOOK ON THE TOPIC, *BREAKTHROUGH SYSTEMS: STUDENT ACCESS AND REGISTRATION*, ALMOST 20 YEARS AGO. WHAT'S THE NEXT BREAKTHROUGH? IS THERE ANY NEW TECHNOLOGY THAT YOU'RE PARTICULARLY EXCITED ABOUT?

Let's get back to the cloud. Our students have been on Google for two years and faculty and staff made the transition this past year. I'm making the adjustment from Outlook to Google and can see advantages in both. I'm also reading "The Circle" by Dave Eggars, a sobering exercise for users of social media and cloud services.

Boston College is implementing the Kuali Student system, and I'm enthusiastic about that. Kuali Student is a next-generation student information system that is being developed incrementally by a community of partner institutions. We've implemented the curriculum management module, and we're completing a fit/gap analysis for course offering, enrollment, and degree audit. It's exciting and a little intimidating to be among the pioneers using this community source model. Kuali is also partnering with third-party vendors including Sigma Systems to develop student account and financial aid systems. If all goes according to plan, Boston College may be the implementing institution for the student account module. We're replacing an aging legacy system, which is also the case at several other institutions. Others are implementing modules as add-ons to an existing enterprise system. For example, the Academic Planning module is a nice add-on to any student system.

In the course of implementing the curriculum management module, we took the opportunity to convert from three to four-digit course numbers, develop subject codes, and introduce a Course Information and Schedule with an Amazon look and feel. Students can use searches and filters or find links to required books, online course evaluations, and course syllabi. Although the projects involve integration with our legacy system, data warehouse, and third-party service providers, we are pleased to be implementing a new system over time rather than in one big swoop. Check back with me in a few years to see how it's going.

IN "LEADERSHIP LESSONS FOR NEW PROFESSIONALS," YOU ENCOURAGE NEW PROFESSIONALS TO DEVOTE TIME TO LIFELONG LEARNING. I THINK THAT'S A VERY IMPORTANT MESSAGE AND IT'S CLEARLY SOMETHING YOU'VE EMBRACED! IN THE COUPLE YEARS SINCE THAT ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED, MOOCS HAVE APPEARED ON THE SCENE. HAVE YOU TRIED ONE? WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THEM?

I will confess that I have not tried a MOOC. I would love to but it hasn't moved up the priority list at this time. I spend the better part of the day in front of a computer screen composing email, writing reports, and reading higher education articles. In my leisure time, I prefer to get outdoors and walk, attend a movie or a play, or have dinner with friends.

I do try to follow the evolution of MOOCs, and I think what I'm reading now about interest from Fortune 500 companies for training and development is ideal. I did recommend MOOCs to a family member who was returning to work as an engineer after sending all three of her children off to school. It's a great way to brush up on skills, or learn new ones. I'm sure I'll begin to participate when I eventually retire and have more leisure time. It's an easy and convenient way to engage in in lifelong learning.

ONE OF THE MOST CRITICAL DECISIONS A BOARD OF DIRECTORS CAN MAKE IS THE HIRING OF AN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR. THE DECISION I'M MOST PROUD OF IN MY TIME ON THE AACRAO BOARD WAS HIRING MIKE REILLY, WHO IS DOING A WONDERFUL JOB AS AACRAO'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR. YOU WERE ON THE BOARD THAT HIRED JERRY SULLIVAN, WHO HAD SUCH AN ENORMOUS POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE ASSOCIATION. THAT WAS AN OUTSTANDING DECISION! WHAT ARE SOME OF THE OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS THAT YOU'D LIKE TO HIGHLIGHT?

Going back to Jack Maguire's lesson about recruiting and hiring the best people you can find, I agree wholeheartedly that one of the most critical decisions a board of directors can make is hiring the Executive Director. We took a risk with Jerry because he had not served in that capacity, though he had served as the director of financial aid at several institutions, as an associate dean of students, and was a loaned executive from the University of Colorado to the Department of Education prior to his application for the position at AACRAO. Jerry's colleague, Bill Haid, was on the board at the time and he encouraged Jerry to apply for the position. It was a win-win for Jerry and AACRAO. Jerry recruited Barmak Nassirian, Janie Barnett, and other talented AACRAO staff who worked tirelessly for the association at a time when a turnaround artist was needed. Jerry brought a level of strategic thinking that had been missing, a New England frugality that was critical at the time, essential guidance about the role of a board member, and a strong relationship with other professional associations. There's no question that the right Executive Director makes all the difference, and makes the job of a board member much easier.

When I first started on the board of directors, I remembered how Jan Doehlert spoke about the amount of time she spent on the annual meeting program including working with committee chairs, selecting sessions, and reading program proofs. I came on the board at a time when we needed to focus on budget, hiring, and strategic planning. We formed a program committee, and appointed conference directors for the SEM and Technology Conferences.

I can't imagine what if would be like at AACRAO if we went back to the days when we didn't have volunteers in those roles. The program committee and the conference directors work very hard on behalf of the association and continuously exceed expectations when it comes to programming, keynote speakers, and networking opportunities. Serving on the program committee or as a conference director, along with serving on the boards of state and regional associations, has become a training ground for board members. You're one of them!

While I was on the board, we also took budget and finance very seriously including scheduled audits, professional investment advice, and aligning the strategic plan to budgetary implications. Under Jerry's leadership our financial position went from one where we were at risk of bankruptcy to a comfortable reserve that allowed us to think about new programming, association infrastructure, and strategic initiatives. It was a challenging and rewarding assignment with lots of just-in-time learning.

YOU WERE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF *C&U* FOR MORE THAN A DECADE. WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THAT EXPERIENCE? WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR ME, AS THE NEW EDITOR-IN-CHIEF?

The best thing about serving as the Editor-in-Chief of *C&U* was that it brought me into contact with members of the profession I probably would not have met. Some were faculty members who had not been members of AACRAO but conducted research related to our profession. Many of them submitted manuscripts, and I had an opportunity to exchange email throughout the review and publication process with thought leaders in enrollment management, retention, or assessment. In fact, I've developed a close friendship with Sharon Cramer as a result of her interest in writing for AACRAO. She wrote "Student Information Systems: A Guide to Implementation Success," she contributed a chapter to "Leadership Lessons: Vision and Values for a New Generation," and she served on the editorial board of *College and University*. We now

enjoy visits to places like the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, and an annual weekend in the Berkshires. This is just one example of the lifelong friendships made as a result of our AACRAO involvement. I know from your Facebook comments and likes that you have many AACRAO friends who will pitch in and help you succeed as Editor-in-Chief.

I enjoyed speaking with colleagues who made presentations at conferences and seeing their surprised reactions when I suggested they write an article about the topic they presented. Many did not realize that their presentation was unique in some way, a breakthrough technology worthy of documentation, or a best practice that would benefit from broader exposure.

I was especially pleased when I heard from members of the profession who offered to write articles or series of articles. Some were enrolled in graduate programs, others wanted to publish the results of their research, and some were interested in sharing something they had implemented related to technology, training, or leadership.

My advice for you: read related publications, listen to presentations, attend a variety of AACRAO conferences, attend other related conferences, and solicit submissions. Many people will not have the time to follow through, but you will be pleasantly surprised when some do, and you may have encouraged a talented young professional to become more involved in the association.

Finally, as long as you have Heather Zimar as the managing editor, you have nothing to worry about. She's an outstanding copy editor, a good communicator, and a well-organized professional. She makes it easy.

I KNOW YOU LOVE TO TRAVEL AND I'M ALWAYS EXCITED TO SEE THE PICTURES FROM YOUR LATEST TRIP ON FACEBOOK. WHERE IS YOUR FAVORITE PLACE TO GO? IS THERE SOMEWHERE YOU'D LOVE TO GO THAT YOU HAVEN'T VISITED BEFORE?

It's a big world and fortunately there are many, many places I have yet to see. I'm thrilled that new direct flights are being added from Logan airport in Boston to places like Dubai, Istanbul, Panama City, and Beijing. I've visited most but not all of these cities, and the flights open up new gateways to nearby destinations. If all goes according to plan, I'll fly to Dubai and travel around the United Arab Emirates for the holidays. I've never been to India, and that flight may be a good gateway for a subsequent trip to Goa. I just purchased the Michelin and Lonely Planet guides for Poland and hope to plan a trip to Krakow and the surrounding area next June.

YOU'VE BEEN AT BOSTON COLLEGE FOR YOUR ENTIRE CAREER. WHY?

I've actually never even applied for a job at another institution. Boston College is a wonderful community of dedicated teachers and scholars, students who hope to make a difference in the world, and colleagues, like me, who stay the course. The campus is beautiful, Ignatian values are inspirational, and I've always been proud to tell people where I work and what I do. I never aspired to this career, but what a great career it has turned out to be. I can't imagine anything I'd rather do.

About the Author

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Featuring Recent Additions to the AACRAO Publications Library

Leadership Lessons: Vision and Values for a New Generation

If the finest voices in higher education were gathered together in one room to discuss leadership, what would you learn? *Leadership Lessons: Vision and Values for a New Generation* took that notion to create a compilation of 22 articles on the topic of leadership, written by today's leaders in higher education. Filled with unique kernels of wisdom, each chapter shares the authors' visions and values in ways that inspire, motivate, and illustrate how to be an exceptional leader. Authors include many who have worked in the registrar's office for decades to others with varied backgrounds in theater, student activism and German literature. This is a book you will want to share with colleagues, friends and employees; all of whom will benefit from the lessons learned by these remarkable, wise and fascinating professionals.

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AACRAO's Professional Development Guidelines for Registrars: A Self-Assessment

For nearly 40 years, AACRAO has published the Self-Assessment, and this 185-page update will provide a cost effective and simple way to evaluate your office operations by stimulating thought, encouraging self-reflection, and evaluating policies and procedures. The Assessment is arranged by topical area with chapters addressing most basic registrar functions. Within each chapter are Basic Principles, which provide a foundation for the discussion topic and guide the development of the questions that follow. The questions give direction, evoke thought, and allow for a variety of approaches to a given topic. Action Plan items are provided to expand your expertise and allow more in-depth study of a topic. Finally, a Further Reading section has been added to the end of each chapter to direct the reader to useful resources on the topics discussed.

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Transforming Student Administrative Services: Setting up the One Stop Centre for Students at Nanyang Technological University

By Saravanan S/O G. Sathiyaseelan

Change is a reality at any organization. Transformation can take any of the following forms: structural, functional, business process redesign, staffing and resource allocation, system and workflow reengineering, and development of information systems. The impetus for such transformations, be it trivial or vital, usually is external rather than internal and typically is regarded as a necessary evil. Yet the organization that refuses to embrace change risks becoming outdated and obsolete.

Change is always accompanied by challenges, including resistance, lack of conviction, low participation, high expectations, fear of loss and control of "territory," inability to visualize the final outcome, skepticism, resource constraints, and uncertainty, to name just a few. Across any organization, regardless of its size, transformation is almost inevitably resisted.

Nanyang Technological University's student administrative services were in need of transformation. Not only did the structures and functions within departments need to be altered, but the department-centric approach and mindset needed to be made *service*-centric. Rapid but comprehensive consolidation was necessary, as were new perspectives on service delivery and expanding horizons by leveraging technology. Transformation would result in greater opportunities for staff and would have a major impact on the university. Staff, student, and parent responses to the transformations have been overwhelmingly positive.

CONTEXT FOR CHANGE

At most universities, units that serve students tend to be classic models of Weberian bureaucracy (Kvavik and Handberg 2000). Weber argued that bureaucracy is the most efficient and rational way in which to organize human activity and that systematic processes and organized hierarchies are necessary to maintain order and maximize efficiency. In modernity, however, bureaucracy has taken on negative connotations (Raadschelders 1998, p.142). A list of the many limitations of bureaucracies would include but certainly not be limited to their complexity, inefficiency, and inflexibility.

When units operate in silos, staff and student interaction eventually is compromised. The delivery of student services becomes both inefficient and costly with an overemphasis on non-value added and outmoded manners of work involving unwanted resources. Units function as independent entities with different values, perspectives, and information, resulting in negative consequences for students. Instead, institutional units should act and function holistically as part of a united organization. Increasing opportunities for students to advocate for themselves,

decentralizing information, and providing a focal access point for students are the key factors for enhancing productivity and efficiency.

The Student Services Centre (SSC) at Nanyang Technological University housed the Office of Academic Services (the Registrar's Office), the Office of Admissions and Financial Aid, the Graduate Studies Office, the Office of Finance, the Career and Attachment Office, the Housing and Auxiliary Services Office, and the Student Affairs Office. Located on different levels of a six-story building, each office had its own front desk providing walk-in services to students; these operated independently of one another, with no mutual support. Another two offices—the Office of Global Education and Mobility and the IT service desk—were frequently visited by students but were located in other buildings remote from the SSC. Furthermore, the SSC was located away from the main academic complex and thus was inconvenient for students to access. Students had to spend significant time and effort travelling to and from departments on different levels and to various locations on campus to resolve their issues.

The NTU 2015 Master Plan identified the establishment of a One Stop Centre as a specific initiative. The centre would deliver high-quality, innovative and integrated student services in order to enhance all students' educational experience and foster their forming of a lifelong relationship with the university. The goal was to replace the department-centric mindset with a student-centric mindset. It was decided that university-wide student service delivery should be located near the student activities hub. The "one stop" concept was to consolidate services across several administrative departments and to make them readily available to students at a strategic and convenient location.

The One Stop Centre would also act as the nerve center and information counter for visitors with general inquiries about the university. It would demonstrate the university's commitment to excellence by professionally and politely serving students and visitors. Assistance and advice would be accurate and readily available. NTU's reputation among students and the public at large would be excellent.

CHALLENGES

All change poses challenges. In establishing a One Stop Centre at NTU, four key challenges had to be overcome:

- Gathering and optimizing resources to better manage service delivery;
- Aligning processes and achieving a seamless interface between front- and back-end services provided by all offices to ensure continuity, maximum efficacy, and minimal (or even the complete elimination of) service disruptions, with no lapses between them;
- Managing and meeting customers' expectations and demands; and
- Shaping the mindset of all involved to work toward a common goal/objective.

These challenges had the potential to affect the project timelines, schedules, and operations. Nevertheless, I maintained a positive attitude. As Winston said, "A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty" (Churchill n.d.).

- **Resources:** Resources are the backbone of an organization's success, capability, and functional strength. They include staffing, budget, and physical space, so it is not surprising that they should constitute a significant challenge. Redeploying resources from various administrative departments had to be carefully evaluated and tactfully executed. Service processes had to be reengineered in order to remove non-value-adding works while minimizing resource consumption. This helped eliminate waste and resulted in some staff being transferred to the One Stop Centre to support its operations. One Stop is also a catalyst for rethinking staff assignments so as to maximize the benefit to the organization.
- **Alignment and Interface:** Because all front-counter services at the SSC would migrate to the One Stop Centre, sub-processes within service flows had to be streamlined in order to optimize and enhance the services being delivered. Non-value-adding or -contributing works had to be removed or simply rerouted through other processes. Services would become leaner, operate with fewer variations, be more efficient, and meet customers' needs. Given the radical redesign of service processes, products and services offered by One Stop are now standardized and well-integrated, and they champion new initiatives without compromising service levels.
- **Customers:** Approximately 90 percent of our customers are students. For that reason—and so we could understand their expectations of this project—we sought

feedback from student leadership groups. Some expressed clear expectations while others merely presented suggestions. Regardless, student input was collated and discussed. Students' perspective was varied: whereas some thought of the pending improvement as dramatic, others perceived it as incremental. Regardless, it was clear that establishing the One Stop Centre was a much-needed improvement for NTU.

- **Mindset:** Implementing the One Stop Centre would result in a change of operating model. Staff who had been in the organization for a long time had become accustomed to a style of working and a certain tradition and were content (or at least familiar) with the then-current culture. Resistance to change had to be overcome through regular change management workshops, stakeholder meetings, and project discussions. It was imperative to communicate the vision so as to promote everyone's adoption of it.

One Stop serves as the benchmark for service excellence; providing leadership and guidance for undergraduate and post graduate students on all matters. It offers a wide array of seamless and integrated student services in areas of academic services, exam matters, admission and matriculation services, replacement of cards, financial aid, accommodation, insurance and medical claims, issuance of certificates and certification letters, document verification, lost and found, career guidance, general enquiries, and all payment issues. Overall, it serves as a focal point for financial transactions and all student-related matters.

Another One Stop initiative was to operate in a cashless environment. Although One Stop was designed to be cashless, cash transactions remain common elsewhere on campus, and this has resulted in some inconvenience to students and staff. It is worth noting, however, that the use of cash is decreasing as a result of the popularity of other payment modes, such as General Interbank Recurring Order, Telegraphic Transfer, and cheques. It was timely for NTU to use the advent of its One Stop Centre to promote awareness of the institutional goal of becoming a cashless campus.

Other education institutions worldwide are also seeking to become cashless campuses. (The government of Singapore is advocating for a cashless society, and many believe that one day, electronic payments will displace cash completely.) It is imperative for NTU to prepare its students for related changes and to become familiar with other modes of cashless payments that have become common beyond the NTU campus.

Although it was challenging at the outset to promote the vision of becoming a cashless campus, it eventually became evident that such a transformation would have widespread benefits. The advantages of cashless transactions are tremendous; they include decreased risk related to the physical handling of cash, new technological advancements in the form of smart cards, and decreased service delivery time, among others.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Because the establishment of One Stop was a key strategic initiative for improving service delivery to NTU students, we sought to implement an end-to-end IT solution that would deliver high-quality, innovative and integrated student services. As a result, students' commitment and connectedness with the NTU would be further strengthened. It is worth noting that the IT system to support the business operations of One Stop is crucial; it ensures the full integration of all of the touch points through which students communicate their requests and queries to the administrative departments.

Creating the One Stop Centre was intended to achieve the following objectives:

- Enhanced operational efficiency: We sought to enhance administrative excellence through shared services that would decrease the human resources needed to support counter operations and that would improve business-user productivity and student satisfaction, particularly with regard to turn-around time.

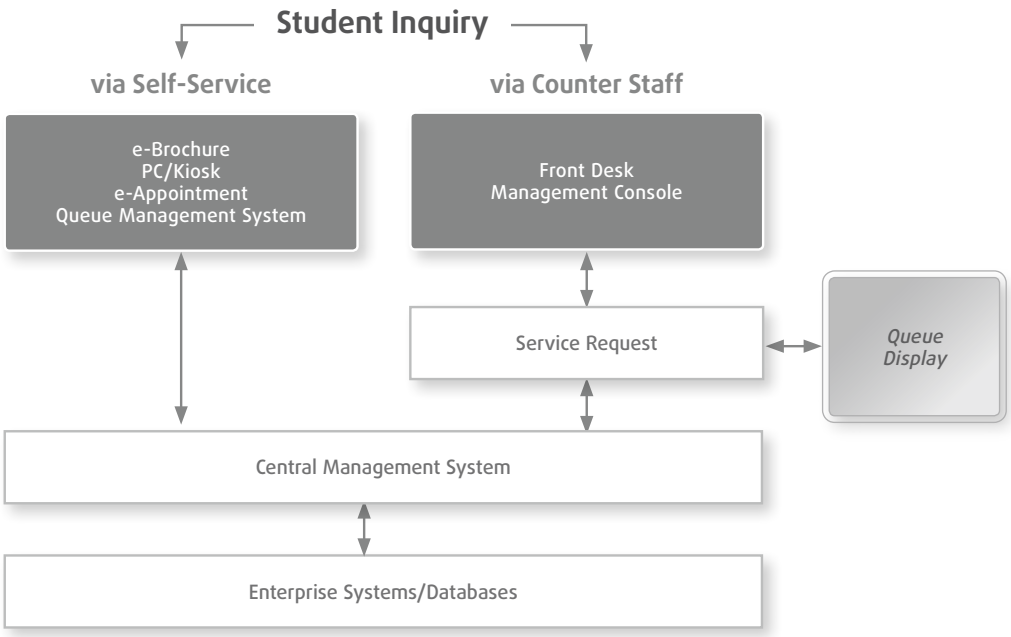

FIGURE 1. *Overall IT Infrastructure*

- Go cashless and paperless: We sought to promote a cashless culture campus-wide. Providing more online services would help reduce student demand for printing and thereby would support environmental sustainability.
- Accrue cost savings: We sought to derive cost savings by appropriately streamlining business processes and managing an efficient workforce.

We eliminated many redundancies and inconsistencies in processes and procedures during the phase devoted to streamlining processes. A Knowledge Library that includes checklists, FAQs, service catalogs, and support guides was created to support staff members' ability to respond accurately to a wide range of student requests.

The 'Central Console Management System' (CMS) tracks all student requests and thus is the core module of the IT solution. The system includes five customized workflows designed to increase service efficiency and delivery for faster turn-around. Different types of cases are routed automatically to support staff with the requisite skill sets for answering students' queries. The five workflows include payment, collection, application/submission, inquiries, and certification requests.

The overall features of one stop system architecture are as follows:

- The *Central Console Management System* consists of a Web portal that enables students to track their requests, thus allowing them to "self-help" in creating new requests and to get updates regarding existing cases. This added convenience also helps to reduce the need for physical visits and frees staff members' time so they can respond to more urgent requests at the physical location.
- When counter staff are not able to serve a student at the Centre, they can utilize the central *e-Appointment System* to schedule a time when the student can meet with the appropriate domain expert. The e-Appointment System works hand in hand with the Central Console Management System to allow the assignment of certain cases to a specialist (*i.e.*, a domain expert).
- Both the *Queue Management System and the Information Display System* handle the queue of student visitors (as, for example, for ticketing) and provide useful queue information to students waiting at the Centre.

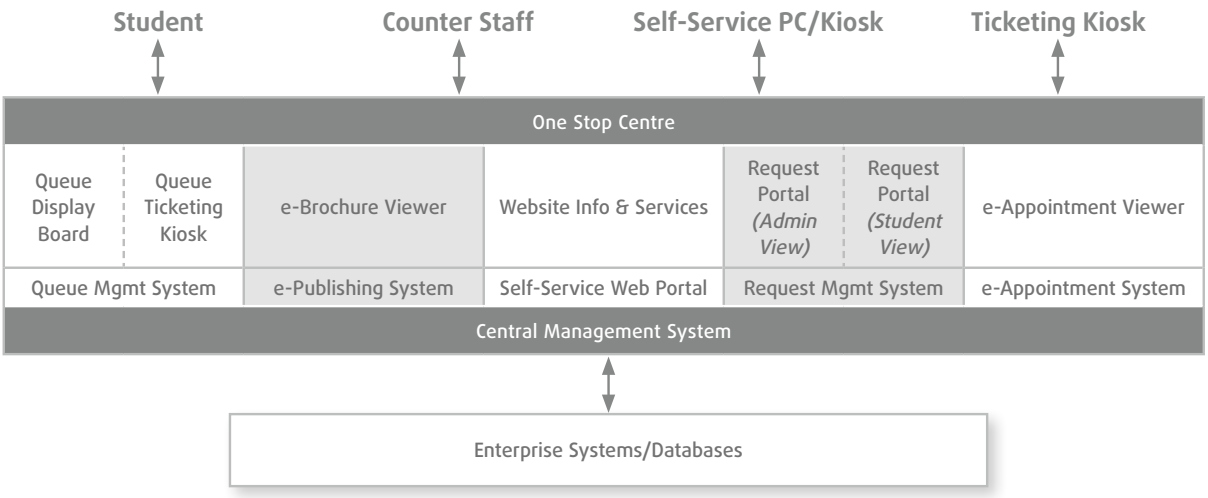

FIGURE 2. *IT Interface*

The Queue Management System also enables students to check their queue status through the Web portal so they can better manage their time.

- The *Central e-Brochure System* allows students to view information provided by the various departments about Exchange/Internship Programme details within NTU. The brochures are available via online portal as well as at self-service kiosks at various locations. A mobile app is also available so students can download information to their mobile devices.

The physical and virtual aspects of the One Stop Centre enhance the university's responsiveness to its students and are more convenient for NTU students than what was available previously. This is one of the key initiatives related to NTU's vision to be a world-class institute of higher learning.

ACHIEVING THE VISION

Although our primary goal was to administer better student services, numerous processes and workflows owned and controlled by other administrative departments were identified, analyzed, and rethought in order to fundamentally improve NTU's customer service. Technological advances have caused the world to shrink. Management and information systems and technology were critical in paving the way for innovative breakthroughs and refinement of business processes (particularly as compared to merely improvising using existing resources). Business processes were streamlined, and owners were taught to rethink and constantly strive toward redesign and integration so as to better support the organization's mission as well as cost-reduction efforts.

New professional roles and functions had to be specified. Many more professionals were trained to multitask and to take on new and challenging assignments given their newfound ability to function in teams. The culture of service excellence was taught to all staff who was assigned to the One Stop Centre. They were cross-trained in many useful areas, including handling general inquiries, serving as customer service officers, learning new technology and systems, solving problems, and doubling as administrative officers (as needed). NTU's customer service officers support One Stop's operations; they are equipped with the attitudes, skills, and knowledge necessary to collaborate with

other departments so as to facilitate the "smooth flow" of processes and information even from back offices. The adage "Jack of all trades but master of none" no longer applies. (My own version of the adage as it pertains to the One Stop Centre is "Jack of many trades and master of at least one.")

The first step in our creation of the One Stop Center was to acknowledge the importance and the need to reorganize student services. Promoting a 'no wrong door' philosophy while concurrently identifying gaps in staff members' skill sets proved an important second step. The next big leap was to plan and implement the massive changes in business processes and technology. The ultimate vision of One Stop was—and is—to drive transformational change by serving as a catalyst for the elimination of gaps between processes and by allowing customers to access the Centre for all general services. Customer service professionals and customers can work together to combine their ideas and creativity; after all, the end user is responsible for the usage and management of personal data and now can engage discrete tasks simultaneously.

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About the Author

SARAVANAN is currently the Head of One Stop @ SAC in Nanyang Technological University (NTU). This is basically an integrated student services centre. Saravanan is the first to Head this Centre, which is also the first of its kind for NTU. Saravanan was the Project Manager and formed this Centre from scratch. This challenging project was undertaken to improve and enhance Student Life, and transform the way student services were delivered. Saravanan helped to streamline and consolidate a large number of administrative office functions and services provided across the University.

Career Mapping: An Innovation in College Recruitment and Retention

By Richard S. Rafes, Shauna L. Malta, and Mary T. Siniscarco

Many high school students and their families are faced with the difficult decision of selecting a college. Decisions are made based on a multitude of factors that typically fall into three main categories: characteristics of the education institution, academic program offerings, and family and peer influence. Applicants consider the location, size, and cost of the institution; traditions at the school; financial aid eligibility; athletic and cocurricular opportunities; and peer group associations. Academic programs, student outcomes, and points of distinction are reviewed and compared across institutions. The influence of peers and family members and the student's ultimate career objectives also play a significant part in the decision-making process (Tinto 1975).

While some students identify a career of interest prior to their enrollment in college, others do not do so, have unrealistic career objectives, or change their career objectives after they matriculate (Anderson 1985). Students are not always aware of the future career opportunities that may be available to them once they graduate from college. This article is intended to help college admissions officers and academic advisors provide guidance to students during their transition to college.

High school juniors and seniors have a number of choices to make; among the most important are deciding which college to attend and which academic major will "fit" well with their career goals. Traditionally, when considering career opportunities for students, high school counselors first consider an institution's major program offerings. For example, if a student wants to become a doctor, the counselor might look for a college with a strong biology or biochemistry program. This certainly is an effective strategy for the majors that link directly to certain careers, but what about the many careers unknown to students and counselors and achieved via a "road less traveled?" How does one determine the best trajectory from aspiration to career? Consider the student who believes that the only career option for an English major is to teach English at a secondary or postsecondary school. Similarly, the student might believe that earning a degree in philosophy could only lead to teaching that discipline. Yet as with other majors, the breadth of careers a student may pursue with either an English or a philosophy degree is actually much greater, particularly given that the need for effective communicators and critical thinkers extends well beyond the classroom. But uncovering this information is not easy and can be daunting.

College admissions officers seek ways to market their institutions, distinguish their programs, and recruit the most qualified students. One strategy is to provide college

prospects and their families with relevant information about available career opportunities. If college personnel outline clear paths to students' career objectives during their interactions with the students and their families, then the decision to pursue an academic program at a particular college means the successful conversion from interested applicant to accepted student.

Student success in college is not guaranteed. Many factors contribute to retention and persistence to degree completion, including academic performance, financial circumstances, peer acceptance, ability to cope with separation from home, and appreciation of the ultimate benefit of education. Most colleges have established services that support students' academic success—for example, academic alert systems, student mentoring, and academic advising (Cuseo 2005). Studies indicate that students' academic advisors play a significant role in identifying career objectives; this guidance can help motivate students to stay in school and complete their degrees (Cuseo 2005). In addition, programs and outreach plans target students' transition to college. Career services are found on nearly all campuses; however, career services staff members often do not connect with students until their junior or senior year. Career officers could have a much greater influence if counseling commenced at the time of college acceptance or enrollment. Career opportunities could be explored much earlier, with students being encouraged to focus on a particular career or area of interest early in their college experience. Coursework then might be more meaningful and relevant to student outcomes and thereby contribute to students' persistence.

As noted above, admissions officers and high school counselors play critical roles in guiding students toward college and careers as they help students select colleges that offer majors that lead to attractive career options. College academic advisors further guide students toward majors and career choices and thus encourage them to persist through college. This article describes a career pathways tool to assist admissions officers in their recruitment of students. Admissions officers in turn can provide high school guidance counselors and academic advisors with customized versions of the career pathways tool described in this article.

JOURNEY FORWARD: BRINGING CAREER PATHWAYS INTO FOCUS

Like most higher education institutions, Utica College offers high-quality academic programs. Unfortunately, some students succeed in meeting program outcomes only to learn that job prospects upon graduation are limited. At a time when the unemployment rate is less than favorable, students are keenly aware of their marketability. In *The Role of Academic Advising in Student Retention and Persistence,* Drake (2011) describes Bernie, an English major who initially questioned his choice of major. Drake attributes Bernie's career outcome as follows: "He has been working in the pharmaceutical industry for the past seven years, managing IT implementation for Regulatory Affairs and working on projects that literally extend across all regions of the world" (p. 12). Bernie credits his English degree as foundational to his success:

> *I use the critical thinking and communication skills I learned studying literature at Temple every day. The study of literature fed my analytical side and forced me to articulate my analysis, opinions, and decisions* (Drake 2011, p. 12).

It was apparent that many "Bernies" exist at our institution. How might we help them—and all our students—envision career possibilities that relate to particular programs of study and skill sets? As we consulted with our Career Services staff, reviewed various publications and government reports, and conversed with faculty about the success of our graduates, we created a rather extensive list of possible career opportunities for each major. We considered the best instrument for providing the information, understanding that many individuals are visual learners and prefer information that is presented in a clear and concise manner. Through trial and error, we created a unique template for career mapping. When the concept was shared with faculty members at Utica College, many helped further develop the career map for their specific programs. Key program characteristics were defined, and student learning outcomes were identified and promoted on the career maps. The maps have been used by faculty, academic advisors, career services personnel, and admissions recruiters.

Consider the sample English major career map. (*See* Figure 1, on page 49.)

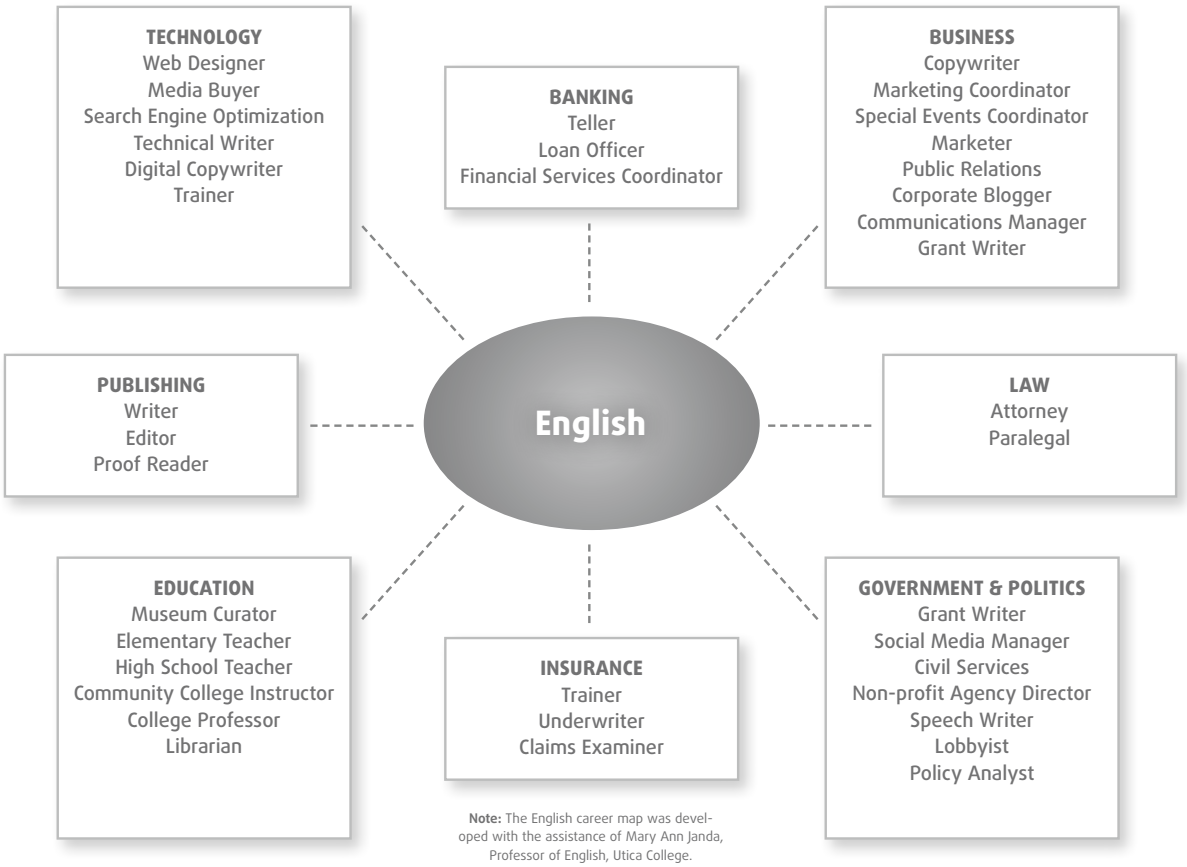

FIGURE 1. *Sample English Major Career Map*

The career map links the academic major to possible careers in a range of occupational areas. It includes links to information and statistics compiled by the U.S. Department of Labor as well as other websites that provide, inter alia, detailed job descriptions, salaries, and current and future job outlooks. It is important to convey that the careers listed on the maps may require additional training, education, and/or certification. The reverse side of the career map identifies distinguishing characteristics of the major and student learning outcomes. (See Figure 2, on page 50.)

The map has a dual purpose: It serves as a source of information to promote retention as well as a recruitment strategy that can be provided to high school guidance counselors and college admissions recruiters. Most important, the map helps current and prospective students understand how their academic interests connect to specific jobs or series of jobs, thus facilitating career goal setting through degree completion. The map also clarifies options for students who are unable to meet the academic requirements of a particular major or career path. Additional career pathways are identified and thereby promote retention.

Choosing a major early in one's academic journey is key to student retention. Kreysa (2006) reports that students who had clear career goals were more likely to persist. Yorke (2000) states that students who were not committed to their career objective or who felt that they had chosen the wrong career objective were more likely to leave college. We believe that a tool such as the career map may help students confirm their career objectives and thereby increase retention as well as provide alternative options for students who do not achieve their initial career goals.

While it may prove effective for some students to provide a map without also providing guidance, most students will derive the greatest benefit by consulting with an academic advisor. The expanded role of the academic advi-

HEALTH STUDIES MAJOR — POINTS OF DISTINCTION

- Small classes with individualized attention
- Interdisciplinary and inter-professional education provided
- Opportunities for students to complete non-clinical professional field experience
- Expert faculty with diverse clinical experience
- Exposure to varied career options

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES — SKILLS ACQUIRED FOR HEALTH STUDIES

- Effective communication and interaction with individuals having diverse backgrounds
- Awareness of the varied roles and responsibilities of different health care professionals (OT, PT, Nursing, Therapeutic Rec, Psych-Child Life)
- Application of concepts related to human development when working with individuals across the lifespan
- Critical thinking to analyze current evidence in order to advocate for patients and clients and become consumers of research
- Identification of professional conduct and behaviors expected of a health care professional

Note: The health studies career map was developed by Mary Siniscarco, Assistant Professor and Chairperson for the Department of Health Studies, Utica College.

FIGURE 2. *Sample Health Studies Career Map*

sor is supported in the literature (Drake 2011). King (1993) reports that the role of the academic advisor is to provide quality advisement in efforts to impact the life of the student. Utilizing career maps during advising appointments enriches advisement meetings at Utica College. The advisor begins the conversation by presenting the visual map. The map serves as a catalyst for conversations that often are difficult to initiate. Students as well as parents comment on the effectiveness of the career maps in their academic planning.

Literature on student attrition strongly suggests that a student's failure to become integrated academically, as signified by the student exhibiting confusion when choosing a major and career, is often associated with withdrawal from college (Tinto 1993, Wood 1994). Recent theories suggest that "students who choose a major that is congruent with their skills and interests are more likely to succeed and persist in that major and in college" (Allen and Robbins 2008, 62). At Utica College, students who determine their career path by their sophomore year are often more successful in achieving their academic goals. Conversely, students who do not identify a career objective during their first two years of college tend to struggle academically and are at greater risk of withdrawing. We hypothesize that using "career maps" will help our students determine their career objectives, thereby increasing their retention.

Smart, Feldman, and Ethington (2000) found that once students obtain the right academic fit, the likelihood of persistence within the major increases. One way to facilitate an appropriate academic fit is to provide a multitude of career options for consideration. The career map provides this information in a tangible and comprehensive format. Tracey and Robbins (2006) found that the greater a student's interest in his major, the higher the rate of student retention. The career map provides the initial direction toward choice of major and intended career.

The career map has the potential to enhance career certainty. If students are advised and presented with information that encourages their selection of academic major, they likely will demonstrate an increased commitment to degree completion. Students and those who support them—families, staff, and faculty members—will benefit from the visual matrix as it assists in the decision-making process and promotes students' recognition of the practical value of higher education.

Cuseo (2005) speaks to the importance of intentionally designed strategies that improve the effectiveness of academic decision making and career planning. The proactive utilization of career maps is a strategy that can produce

benefits for students as well as higher education institutions. Student satisfaction and retention will increase as students identify and pursue academic programs they find meaningful and congruent with their skills and interests.

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Understanding Student Veteran Disabilities

By Rodney Parks and Erin Walker

In the interest of admissions and retention, campus administrators are responsible for making themselves aware of unique challenges that may impact persistence and quality of life for specific student cohorts. In this section, the types of disabilities that veterans may cope with are discussed in depth, including post-traumatic stress disorders, traumatic brain injury, along with social pressures. In order to provide exceptional resources and support to student veterans, it is vital that colleges and universities understand the significant challenges some veterans face as they return to civilian life and to campus.

HISTORY OF COMBAT DEPLOYMENT AND RELATED STRESS

War has always been associated with trauma, but it was not until the Civil War that the United States became aware of trauma's ability to cause clinically diagnosable complications. The Civil War caused over 600,000 American casualties, mostly due to disease. At this time the problems associated with exposure to trauma were characterized as *battle fatigue* (French and Nikolic-Novakovic 2012). Battle fatigue, now known as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), was thought to be a sort of fear and confusion following combat exposure that was due to soldiers' homesickness. The diagnosis evolved into *traumatic war neurosis* at the end of the 19th century and to *shell shock* in World War I, but it was still considered a transient condition until World War II (French and Nikolic-Novakovic 2012), when 750,000 wounded soldiers returned from combat. This documented number of wounded did not include soldiers who returned without physical injuries but developed psychological disorders as a result of their war experiences. The growing recognition of such disorders among soldiers returning from war provided the impetus for publishing the first edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (*DSM-I*) in 1952 (French and Nikolic-Novakovic 2012).

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Definition and Symptoms

Many problems have been associated with experiences of trauma; however, one psychological disorder has become more prevalent in recent years due to the return of many soldiers from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a psychological disorder that can develop after exposure to one or more traumatic events. The fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM-V*) revised the criteria for diagnosing PTSD. Previously classified as an anxiety

disorder, in the *DSM-V*, PTSD was reclassified as an acute stress disorder. The new criteria include:

- **Criterion A:** Initially, an individual must be exposed to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one or more of the following ways:
  - Experiencing a traumatic event firsthand.
  - Witnessing a traumatic event happening to others as it occurs.
  - Learning of a close family member or friend's traumatic experience.
  - Experiencing extreme exposure to unpleasant parts of a traumatic event(s).

- **Criterion B:** After the traumatic event has occurred, the individual begins to experience one or more of the following intrusion symptoms:
  - Memories of the event that appear sporadically and without effort from the individual.
  - Distressing dreams related to the traumatic event.
  - Feeling or acting as if the event is re-occurring (*i.e.*, flashbacks).
  - Intense psychological distress when exposed to cues of the traumatic event.

- **Criterion C:** The individual demonstrates persistent avoidance of anything associated with the traumatic event through one or both of the following:
  - Attempting to avoid internal reminders of the event (memories, thoughts, or feelings).
  - Attempting to avoid external reminders of the event (people, places, objects or other contextual reminders).

- **Criterion D:** The traumatic event must initiate or exacerbate negative changes in the individual's thoughts or mood, causing two or more of the following:
  - Losses in memory associated with the traumatic event.
  - Thinking negatively about oneself, others, or the world constantly and usually in an exaggerated manner.
  - Distorted thoughts about the traumatic event's causes or consequences (such as blaming oneself).
  - Persistent negative emotions.
  - Lack of interest/participation in activities that were of interest before the event.
  - Feelings of isolation.
  - Persistent inability to experience positive emotions.

- **Criterion E:** Arousal and reactions associated with the traumatic event are significantly altered by two or more of the following:
  - Irritability and excessive aggression.
  - Reckless or self-destructive behavior.
  - Hyper-vigilance (extreme awareness of and readiness for possible threats).
  - Being easily startled.
  - Inability to concentrate.
  - Insomnia.

- **Criteria F, G, & H:** The disruptions described above must last for at least one month and cause significant distress or impairment in the individual's everyday life and functioning. The problems must not be explainable as consequences of substance use or other medical problems (American Psychiatric Association [APA] 2013).

Risk Factors for Developing PTSD

As with many medical conditions, certain risk factors increase the likelihood of developing PTSD. Frazier *et al.* (2011) found high neuroticism, negative affect, and prior distress to be significant risk factors for developing PTSD. High neuroticism has been consistently indicated in the development of anxiety, mood, and stress disorders. Although most studies have emphasized the co-morbidity of anxiety and mood disorders, genetic links for high neuroticism are associated with stress disorders as well (Butcher, Mineka, and Hooley 2012).

Neuroticism is a personality trait characterized by a temperamental sensitivity to negative stimuli; for example, a highly neurotic person is more likely to feel anxiety over failing a test (Butcher *et al.* 2012). Negative affect accompanies the neurotic personality, and these individuals are more likely to experience negative emotions such as anxiety, guilt, and hostility (Butcher *et al.* 2012). Individuals with neurotic traits who experience a traumatic event are likely to be more severely affected by the event than individuals who can easily move past negative stimuli and are more prone to positive moods. Several studies have noted that people with neurotic personalities are also more likely to experience life events as stressful (Butcher *et al.* 2012). This

predisposition could predict a higher likelihood for service members who have gone through highly stressful events, such as experiencing a fellow soldier being killed, as traumatic; this could further lead to a higher likelihood of developing PTSD instead of moving past the traumatic event.

Frazier *et al*. (2011) note that despite their finding that high self-esteem and optimism prior to experiencing a trauma were significant protective factors, the risk factors for PTSD override the protective factors in predicting the development of the disorder. The study also found that the severity of a traumatic event has a significant positive correlation with the number of PTSD symptoms reported. Moreover, an individual's perception of severity overshadows the actual severity of a traumatic event; if one believes an event was horrific it will affect them as though it was actually horrific, even if others may not have ascribed the same significance to the event. Thus individual cognitions are key factors in predicting and diagnosing PTSD.

Perceived control is another important cognition influencing the development of PTSD. Individuals with a high perceived level of control following a traumatic event are better equipped to overcome the feelings of terror and helplessness that often accompany such events (Frazier *et al*. 2011). Social factors are also significant, as social support following traumatic events is significantly negatively correlated with the number of PTSD symptoms reported (Frazier *et al*. 2011). A lack of support from family or friends can also increase the likelihood of developing PTSD symptoms and hinder recovery. Positive social relationships, in contrast, foster self-esteem, confidence, and opportunities for communication. Social support is a highly effective coping mechanism; individuals need to talk about traumatic experiences, and those with supportive social systems can more readily discuss such events with people they know and trust.

Traumatic Events

Many life events that are viewed as traumatic by one person may be seen as merely sad by another. For example, a homicide detective is disproportionately exposed to seeing violent death, but may not experience these scenes as traumatic. In contrast, a soldier involved in a firefight in an active combat zone may experience the battle, the death of fellow soldiers, or even the killing of the enemy as traumatic. For this reason, the *DSM-V* classification of traumatic events is very broad. Jelena Jauković (2002) has described what makes traumatic experiences so traumatic:

> *From the victim's point of view trauma is an experience of life, i.e., the complex reaction to the event that endangers one's existence. The reaction to such an event arouses the complex mechanism of the physical, emotional, cognitive and willing processes. The event that arouses such reactions is quite unexpected, and behaviour becomes unusual. It is an entirely normal response to an abnormal situation; the responses are deeply rooted in the philogenetic base of survival* (Jauković 2002, p. 177).

In situations so far outside the realm of ordinary experience, Jauković explains, reacting with fear or unusual behavior is to be expected. In some cases, the source of the threat an individual perceives may not be apparent to others. For example, stressful life events such as the divorce of one's parents can lead to PTSD symptoms (Robinson and Larson 2010). Moreover, when an individual experiences both a stressful life event and a traumatic event, or multiple traumatic or stressful events, exposure to the initial event can result in a learned response that heightens the possibility of developing PTSD symptoms in response to future events (Robinson and Larson 2010).

About 31 percent of soldiers returning from Afghanistan reported engaging in contact with the enemy (firefight), and in Iraq the numbers were much higher, with 71 to 86 percent of those deployed reporting such contact (Hoge *et al*. 2008). Moreover, these numbers, drawn from 2008 data, have likely only increased in the intervening years.

Daryl Paulson, co-author of *Haunted by Combat: Understanding PTSD in War Veterans*, served in the U.S. Marine Corps during the Vietnam War. He writes:

> *I participated in combat operations in the dreaded A Shau Valley and Sherwood Forest in the Antenna Valley, where so many of my comrades were killed, as well as the much feared Arizona Territory, where anything that moved became a target. Combat was vastly different than I had imagined. It was exhilarating and exciting but also physically taxing, emotionally draining, morally disturbing, and, worst of all, spiritually deadening* (Paulson and Krippner 2010, pp. xi–xii).

Paulson describes an experience that can force individuals to resort to basic survival instincts. Witnessing the

death of fellow soldiers, living in a constant state of hyperawareness that required shooting anything that moved, engaging in combat day after day, and facing unrelenting threats to his own life, created a stress response that was normal for this situation. However, when he returned from deployment and these threats were no longer present, the response nevertheless persisted. While the stress response is thus normal and expected, it is the adaptation following the response that determines whether PTSD will develop, or whether a gradual adaptation to and recovery from the experience will occur.

When an individual feels threatened, the body generally reacts with a "fight or flight" response. This response allows the nervous system to prime the muscles and brain to either fight against or flee from a dangerous situation (Paulson and Krippner 2010). Traumatic experiences invoke the fight or flight response as a means of survival, as the body instinctively seeks to do whatever it can to survive. According to Jauković, responses to traumatic events follow a predictable sequence. An initial reaction of shock is followed by fear; an automatic reaction of either searching for rescue or an automatic reaction to rescue others; a rational acts phase will then occur, in which they will attempt to take necessary action on moving forward, such as getting to safety; the euphoria upon the realization of survival; a sobering and depressive mood toward reality; and finally adaptation and acceptance of the event (Jauković 2002). For some people, however, progression through this series is halted such that the final stage, adaptation, is never reached. When such an interruption occurs, individuals may develop psychological disorders such as PTSD, major depressive disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, or a variety of other disorders.

Physiologically, traumatic stimuli activate the amygdala, the part of the brain that deals with emotions such as fear. This activation triggers an output to other areas of the brain, including those that process memory. In PTSD, the amygdala is activated excessively by threatening stimuli, and as a result the medial prefrontal cortex is unable to carry out its usual inhibitory and mediatory processes (Hermann, Shiner and Friedman 2012). The disinhibition of the amygdala in traumatic situations continuously activates the fear response, causing "fear conditioning" to occur; in this situation the brain persistently experiences fear and fear reactions at inappropriate times (Hermann *et al.* 2012).

In such cases the memory of a traumatic event, such as a firefight during active duty combat, can cause the body to feel and act as though it is repeatedly re-experiencing the event (Paulson and Krippner 2010). This response may occur even in the absence of any sign of the original stressor (*i.e.*, participation in another firefight). In times of increased stress unrelated to the original event, the fear reactions the individual originally experienced may also reappear.

IMPACT OF RECENT CONFLICTS AND RATES OF PTSD

About 30,000 American soldiers have been wounded in action since the beginning of the war in Iraq in 2003 (Finley 2011). This number is staggering, yet the number of individuals returning from active combat with psychological injuries is even greater. By 2011, about 120,000 soldiers returning from active duty since 2003 had been diagnosed with PTSD (Finley 2011, p. 2).

Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan experience many of the same types of trauma as did soldiers in the Vietnam War, including participation in intense combat, witnessing the death of friends, and maintaining the hyper-arousal necessary for survival in a war zone. Such experiences may lead to problems with adjustment and integration upon returning from combat. Despite the much more intense level of combat in the Vietnam War, returning soldiers today nevertheless exhibit many of the same adjustment problems. In Iraq the widespread use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) demands extreme hyper-vigilance on the soldiers' part. The attention required and anxiety generated in such an environment can be hard to shed once a soldier returns from combat. In many cases, PTSD and other psychological disorders emerge in response to soldiers' constant anxiety and attempts to protect themselves from threats that are no longer present.

Much of the experience of war involves long stretches of waiting and boredom. When soldiers are not on a mission they must remain on the base, and the boredom and waiting involved in the non-combat aspects of active duty can also affect a soldier's psyche (Paulson and Krippner 2010). Such waiting periods are often characterized by anxiety and anticipation of future combat, and these responses may continue upon returning to civilian life. Thus soldiers returning from active duty may continue to feel a constant sense of anticipation and the relentless need to be aware of their surroundings.

Returning soldiers may also face a sense of isolation; upon returning from combat, they may feel as if the only place they fit in is the military (Paulson and Krippner 2010). Regardless of soldiers' specific experiences during military service, if they are exposed to war and death they are likely to find it difficult to relate to civilians when they return home. All of their combat experiences—even the waiting—are beyond the comprehension of most civilians. Soldiers may feel there is no one at home they can talk to about their experiences, or no one who will understand. With no outlet for these traumatic memories, and no alternative coping mechanism, PTSD as well as other psychological disorders are more likely to develop.

Hoge and colleagues (2008) found that of 1962 soldiers returning from Iraq in 2003, about 78 percent acknowledged that they had a mental health problem; regrettably, only about 38 to40 percent of them indicated a desire to receive mental health care (Hoge *et al*. 2008). The authors attributed this lack of interest in receiving help to service members' concerns about how such treatment would be perceived by their military peers and superiors. Programs such as the Army's "Battlemind" train soldiers to respond to traumatic events with aggression, keeping close with other soldiers and taking control (Finley 2011). While these are important values and skills to have when in an active combat zone, such approaches can be maladaptive in everyday civilian life (Finley 2011). They can cause service members to continue to ignore potentially harmful symptoms of mental illness because they have been trained to be strong and responsible. A veteran officer named Carlos, who served in Afghanistan describes teaching his troops to be impervious to pain, telling them:

> *I've been hurt so many times that it's just like, "It's just a couple of ribs, you'll get over it." I've told that to so many people. "Just ignore it." Sprains, whatever. "It'll go away"* (Finley 2011, p. 109).

Soldiers on active duty are expected to display resiliency and a toughness of both mind and body. To live in a combat zone, to witness and participate in fighting and killing, and to fulfill the many other expectations of military service demands significant physical and mental strength. Thus soldiers who develop mental illness often fear it is, or will be perceived as, a sign of weakness.

French and Nikolic-Novakovic (2012) describe the sense of humiliation that may accompany mental illness within the military culture:

> *Inherent in this culture is the shame and embarrassment of admitting psychological distress. These admissions are contrary to the military code of silence. A soldier is seen as being weak if they "cry" about emotional or psychological problems. There is a fear of peer rejection and of being ostracized or even "drummed out" of the service thus losing membership in a significant reference group. For many troubled veterans, it is better to "suck it up" and take care of the problem themselves, such as self-medicating with alcohol and other mind-altering substances* (p. 69).

Sadly, veterans who do not seek help for PTSD or other mental illnesses are at a higher risk for suicide (French and Nikolic-Novakovic 2012).

Suicide Rates

Recently, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention released a legislative brief in 2013 regarding mental health and suicide in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) veterans, stating:

> *In January 2013 the Department of Defense acknowledged that during 2012, service members committed suicide at a record pace, as more than 349 people took their own lives across the four branches. These figures reflect a 54 percent increase since 2007. During 2012 one active-duty member died by suicide every 25 hours. The Army sustained the heaviest branch toll at 182 suicides, which meant that soldier suicides outpaced combat deaths for the first time, according to Pentagon officials. These figures are preliminary suicide statistics and do not include 110 "pending" reported suicides among active-duty troops in 2012 that are still under investigation by medical examiners* (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention 2013, p. 2).

Paulson and Krippner (2010) report that the suicide rate of veterans has increased every year since 2004, and by 2010 about 20 percent of all suicides were committed by military veterans, who comprise only 8 percent of the population.

The symptoms of PTSD create the psychological conditions that may lead veterans to contemplate suicide, and in the absence of social support and clinical help such

thoughts can lead to self-destructive actions. The interpersonal-psychological theory of suicide suggests that three factors must be present for an individual to contemplate suicide: perceived burdensomeness, social alienation/low sense of belonging, and acquired ability to carry out a suicidal act (Bryan, Hernandez, Allison, and Clemans 2012). *Perceived burdensomeness* refers to the burden an individual believes they are imposing on their family and friends. *Social alienation/low sense of belonging* refers to the degree of loneliness or isolation the individual feels in relation to others and the extent to which they feel they belong with their family and are a part of everyday life. *Acquired ability to carry out a suicidal act* refers to an individual's acquisition of fearlessness or tolerance for pain, indicating their potential to act on suicidal thoughts. These three factors are characteristic of many veterans returning from active duty combat, especially those with PTSD. Bryan *et al.* (2012) concluded that although combat exposure was not found to be directly or indirectly related to suicide risk in either of their samples, variables such as being unafraid of death and displaying PTSD symptoms directly and indirectly contributed to suicide, respectively.

Finley (2011) discusses a veteran named Chris who was sent to Korea in the spring of 2002, after injuring a prisoner in Afghanistan during a prisoner transfer. After being sent away he quickly spiraled out of control and began abusing alcohol. Chris describes his military friends' downward spiral during this time:

> *A good friend of mine killed his wife and then himself. And then another one killed himself and one other person, I think it was his wife's lover. And just recently another friend of mine killed himself, and the war's been long over for him. He was medically retired for emotional imbalance, too, like myself, about the same time. Probably half of that group is either out of the military or dead. It's like the wheels fell off of that group* (Finley 2011, p. 100).

Chris goes on to acknowledge his own suicidal thoughts at that time, and to describe how the military leadership finally intervened in his self-destructive behavior, three years after his behavior and mental state escalated out of control. Chris provides an example of a veteran who for years had no outlet and no help in coping with the stress he experienced during the war. Soldiers are expected to be tough and even indestructible. Yet when denied the help they need, they may crack under the extreme pressure, as Chris' colleagues did.

IMPACT OF MILITARY LIFE ON TRANSITIONING TO COLLEGE

Some soldiers return from active duty combat and find the initial stages to be a wonderful experience. An active marine, Staff Sergeant "G," discussed his return from an eight month deployment in Afghanistan: "It was awesome coming back, it was like you take all the small things for granted but then you get over there and you understand things better. You are able to cope with the little things better" (Staff Sergeant G., personal communication 2013). The Staff Sergeant described his return quite positively, saying he felt much more mature and resilient after his deployment. Unfortunately, many veterans do not respond as positively to their return to civilian life.

Many veterans find their return to be much more difficult than they anticipated. Accustomed to adhering to the military's strict rules and structured environment, to enduring a variety of intense and often traumatic experiences, and to living in a context completely different from that of the United States, they may find it challenging to engage in everyday interactions with civilians. Finley (2011) discusses a veteran student named Jesse who struggled with returning to college at the end of his deployment. Jesse was particularly frustrated in interactions with younger, less mature students. He relates, "I go from [Iraq] to all these little kids who think they have it so f****** hard...Oh my God!" (Finley 2011, p. 65).

Jesse's reaction to returning to college is shared by many student veterans. In a recent Lumina Foundation publication, another student veteran expressed the challenges he faced upon returning to college. "You go from a [military] bureaucracy that tells you everything to do, to a [higher education] bureaucracy that doesn't tell you anything to do—it's a night-and-day shift in structure" (Lumina Foundation 2013, p. 4).

Finley (2011) also discusses the ethical and moral mindset the military drills into its soldiers. The military is a collective culture whose members are taught not to think of themselves first. Most civilians are not used to thinking in these terms, especially civilians the age of most college students. Most young people have different priorities, and

often less maturity, than student veterans have developed during their time in the military.

Student veterans with PTSD may have an even more difficult time integrating into the college environment. The symptoms of PTSD make many aspects of everyday life difficult and can interfere with the veteran student's ability to learn and interact with other students. Little research has examined how PTSD affects the lives of student veterans, but understanding its symptoms and their effects on individuals' everyday lives, and hearing the personal stories of veteran students, can help shed light on their struggles.

Re-Experiencing the Trauma

The PTSD symptom in which individuals repeatedly experience a traumatic event may present itself in a variety of ways. Flashbacks, persistent dreams, sporadically occurring intrusive memories, and reactions to cues that remind one of the event are all manifestations of this symptom (APA 2013). Re-experiencing a trauma can drastically interfere with veterans' everyday lives; even random smells or contexts may trigger a memory or physical reaction. More frustratingly, memories can pop up with no apparent trigger at all. Individuals with PTSD typically avoid situations that have triggered a reaction in the past or seem likely to trigger a reaction. They may isolate themselves from peers and others in an effort to avoid any triggers or because they believe no one can understand what they are going through. Such a response, however, can interfere with a student veteran's social integration and impede their academic achievement.

Finley (2011) interviewed a veteran student named Derek who struggles with PTSD but enrolled in college upon his return from combat. Derek recalled how seeing a man on the roof of one of the college buildings nearly triggered a re-experience of traumatic events he survived in Iraq. He related:

> *I knew it was crazy. I was thinking, he's either a sniper or he's going to radio ahead. And then I thought, "This is San Antonio. There [are no] snipers on the roof, nobody's going to blow me up here." But I still had to walk around so I wouldn't be nervous in class* (Finley 2011, p. 76).

Derek's reaction is common among veterans suffering from PTSD. Unfortunately, the symptoms can present significant challenges to veterans' educational and career goals. Derek was fortunate to be able to overcome the memories and attend class despite his anxiety.

COPING AND RESILIENCY

Coping mechanisms are activities and thought patterns that help individuals through stressful and problematic times. Some coping mechanisms are effective and healthy; for example, talking with someone about anxieties, fears, grief, or other difficult emotions represents a positive coping mechanism that can help individuals endure difficult times. In contrast, isolating oneself from family and friends and bottling up one's emotions represents an unhealthy, ultimately ineffective coping mechanism. PTSD has been shown to foster poorer coping abilities, which can diminish relationship functioning and reduce life satisfaction (Tsai, Harpaz-Rotem, Pietrzak and Southwick 2012).

Resiliency describes an individual's ability to "bounce back" or return to a previous state of mental functioning after confronting stress or adversity (Butcher *et al.* 2012). The term captures an individual's degree of success in coping with and moving past a traumatic event, rather than describing the specific coping mechanism employed. Individuals with greater resiliency who experience a traumatic or stressful event are more likely to recover their prior functioning and less likely to develop negative symptoms or PTSD (Chard, Schumm, Owens and Cottingham 2010).

One study compared Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) veterans with PTSD to OEF/OIF veterans without PTSD who were seeking other types of treatment at the VA. The study examined the veterans' relationship satisfaction and functioning, social functioning, and general life satisfaction (Tsai *et al.* 2012). All participants in the study reported family cohesion difficulties, possibly due to deployment itself. Results suggested that veterans with PTSD were more likely to engage in avoidance behavior, loss of vigilance, and have poorer social functioning and life satisfaction (Tsai *et al.* 2012). Furthermore, Tsai *et al.* (2012) found that veterans with PTSD had a poorer ability to cope with uncomfortable situations, especially social situations, and that resiliency among veterans with PTSD was very low.

Such findings bear directly on veteran students' ability to function in the classroom, and particularly to respond to the stress involved in being put on the spot to answer

questions, give presentations, and generally interact with peers and professors. The authors concluded that veteran students with PTSD might benefit from veteran peer support groups to help them cope with their PTSD symptoms and improve academic performance (Tsai *et al*. 2012). A peer support group would provide a positive coping mechanism and enhance resiliency, in contrast to the negative coping mechanism of isolating oneself that veterans and others with PTSD often employ.

Declarative Memory and Learning

Memory and learning are vital systems in the brain that can be impaired in individuals with PTSD. There are two broad categories of memory: declarative and non-declarative. *Declarative memory* refers to memories of facts and events that can be consciously recalled, while *non-declarative memory* refers to unconscious and inaccessible memories, such as those involved in learning a skill. Brewin, Dalgliesh, and Joseph (1996) proposed a theory describing how these two types of memory influence individuals with PTSD:

> *[T]he theory suggests one conscious, declarative memory representation of the traumatic event, which is verbally accessible and deliberately editable and one unconscious, non-declarative memory representation that cannot be deliberately accessed but can be triggered by perceptual cue* (Diener, Flor, and Wessa 2010, p. 135; Brewin *et al.* 1996).

Brewin *et al*. (1996) also concluded that the formation of declarative memories in the hippocampus, a memory center in the brain, might be limited because of the high stress levels that accompany a traumatic experience, resulting in fragmented, episodic memories of the event. Simultaneously, however, the nervous system's arousal during the event would cause a highly emotional non-declarative memory to form. The result would be numerous perceptual cues that would create countless triggers for memories of the traumatic event.

Diener *et al*. (2010) theorized further that the stress and arousal accompanying a traumatic event might interfere with declarative learning as well as memory consolidation, resulting in higher fear conditioning (Diener *et al*. 2010; Sandi and Pinelo-Nava 2007). For example, someone experiencing a traumatic event would experience stress and arousal during the time of encoding the memory of the event that they experienced. Thus, the encoding stage of learning, in which individuals bring in information, is often compromised in PTSD patients. Diener *et al*. (2010) identified significant deficits in learning but not in memory consolidation in individuals with PTSD, indicating that the impaired performance in verbal memory associated with PTSD might be due to hyperarousal (high degree of stress and excessive vigilance), which impairs the ability to encode information. These results seem to corroborate the theories of Brewin *et al*. (1996) as well.

Impairments in learning and memory among student veterans with PTSD can present considerable challenges in the classroom. The hyperarousal associated with PTSD can hinder the encoding of information into declarative memory, making it difficult for individuals with the disorder to learn new information.

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURIES

Another combat-related injury that is becoming increasingly prevalent in returning service members is traumatic brain injury (TBI). The widespread use of IEDs in the Second Gulf War in Iraq and Afghanistan has increased the prevalence of TBIs among military personnel (French and Nikolic-Novakovic 2012). In 2001, about 3.7 individuals per 10,000 soldiers returning from Afghanistan were hospitalized for TBIs. In 2007, this number rose to 56.6 per 10,000 soldiers. In Iraq, this number went from 22.8 per 10,000 soldiers in 2002, to 77.9 per 10,000 soldiers in 2007. Further research by the RAND Corporation (2008) found a prevalence rate of TBI in soldiers deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan to be at about 19.5 percent, or affecting about 320,000 soldiers.

The explosions of IEDs and suicide bombers, as well as trauma from other events such as car crashes or assaults to the head, can cause not only visible wounds but also invisible injuries, affecting brain functions that influence thoughts and behaviors. Individuals with mild TBIs typically remain conscious following the head trauma or lose consciousness for only a short time (French and Nikolic-Novakovic 2012). Symptoms commonly associated with mild TBIs include "headache, vomiting, nausea, poor motor control, dizziness and balance problems, lightheadedness, blurred vision, ringing in the ears, fatigue/ lethargy and somatic difficulties. Behavioral problems include

mood changes, confusion, memory problems and difficulty concentrating or thinking" (French and Nikolic-Novakovic 2012, p. 45).

More severe TBIs may involve:

> *[A] host of physiological and psychological problems including persistent headaches, vomiting/nausea, convulsions, slurred speech, aphasia, weakness or numbness of limbs, poor motor coordination, confusion, and agitation or impulsive outbursts. Behavioral problems can include deficits in social judgment, inappropriate social interactions and cognitive problems associated with memory, attention and executive functioning* (p. 45).

Due to the traumatic nature of head injuries, individuals who sustain TBIs also commonly develop co-existing disorders, especially PTSD. Barlow-Ogden and Poynter (2012) observed that because PTSD and TBI share many symptoms, it is difficult to identify the exact prevalence of either disorder. However, some reports suggest between 37 and 44 percent of OIF/OEF veterans with TBI may also have PTSD (Hoge *et al*. 2008; Barlow-Ogden and Poynter 2012).

TBIs at all degrees of severity (mild, moderate, and severe) present the same basic symptoms, differing primarily in the extent to which each symptom occurs in the individual (Jones, Young, and Leppma 2010). Mild TBIs (MTBIs) are the most common severity level that occurs in both military and non-military populations; therefore, much of the TBI literature and research has focused on MTBIs. Though "mild" severity may suggest a less invasive or problematic injury, MTBIs may significantly encumber numerous aspects of an individual's life, including the ability to focus and learn in the college environment.

Traumatic brain injury can significantly influence the learning potential of soldiers enrolling in college. For example, soldiers with MTBIs have shown impaired attentional functioning, with poorer attentional functioning among those who also have PTSD (Barlow-Ogden and Poynter 2012; Carroll *et al*. 2004; Moore 2013). The inability to focus can lead to difficulty acquiring and storing information in long-term memory. The occurrence of a TBI also increases the likelihood of developing other physical and psychological disorders, further challenging individuals' functioning, particularly in the learning environment.

Mentoring and Counseling Students with a Traumatic Brain Injury

Veterans with TBIs may find the adjustment to civilian life especially challenging, and enrolling in college introduces a significant additional set of stressors. Students with TBIs need support from staff as well as from veteran peers who can understand their experience. In 2007, the American Council on Education (ACE) introduced a program to assist wounded veterans in transitioning into higher education. The program, called Severely Injured Military Veterans: Fulfilling Their Dream (DiRamio and Spires 2009), identified the support services needed to help injured veterans succeed in higher education.

The ACE found that student veterans often benefit from the support of a mentor in navigating the higher education system. The program identified actions a mentor could take to assist veteran students, actions that might guide university support services in providing assistance as well. The actions include:

- Investing time and energy to help the veteran make informed decisions
- Providing guidance for dealing with the chaos of college and helping bridge the gap between the military's mission-oriented structure and the academic environment
- Serving as a resource to assist with study skills, tutoring support services, veterans affairs issues, and enrollment challenges
- Seeking to build a community-based team of support for the veteran or family member (or both)
- Needing to be flexible and persevere because the veteran or family member will undoubtedly face setbacks and obstacles on his or her journey, particularly when getting started (DiRamio and Spires 2009).

Veterans with a TBI as well as other mental or physical disabilities also benefit from peer counseling, particularly from other veterans, in making their transition to college life (Church 2009; DiRamio and Spires 2009; Brenner *et al*. 2011). Researchers have identified additional measures that assist veterans with TBI:

> *There are several important strategies that can be useful in working with veterans with TBI. These include coaching; scheduling; strategies including alarm clocks, planners, and pagers; scheduling breaks to prevent fatigue;*

checklists; memory aids such as tape recorders; supportive phone calls; adaptive technology; and utilizing GPS. Instruction in skill sets such as developing memory strategies, anger management, and programs that incorporate mentoring and peer support can also assist with education and vocational issues (Church 2009).

Such strategies are key to the success of individuals with TBI because they prevent student veterans with TBIs from falling too far behind their peers. Along with the support and understanding provided by mentors and university faculty and staff, these strategies can help immensely in facilitating this transition.

INSTITUTIONAL AND SOCIAL SUPPORT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

As the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan wind down, military downsizing and budget cuts are inevitable. Campuses across the nation have begun to see increases in student veteran populations as a result of military downsizing, and new GI Bill benefits make it likely that this number will continue to grow. Student veterans represent an extremely diverse subpopulation (Vacchi 2012) that not only differs in significant ways from the general student population, but also demonstrates broad diversity among veteran students themselves.

Adaptation and Adjustment to College

Transitioning from active military duty to higher education can be a daunting task for student veterans. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2011b), the number of VA education program beneficiaries grew from under 400,000 in 2000 to over 900,000 in 2011. However, data on student veterans indicate that 88 percent of veterans drop out of college during their first year and only three percent make it to graduation (Ginder-Vogel 2013). In response to these stark statistics, colleges and universities have begun to tailor services, including counseling services, to address the transition from the military to college life (O'Herrin 2011).

Such specialized services are vital because identity development among student veterans differs from that of traditional student populations. In addition, student veterans may encounter a vast array of transitioning issues as they work to become integrated into the college setting, ranging from role incongruities, to relationship challenges, to problems with identity renegotiation, to issues of maturity in general (Rumann and Hamrick 2010).

Student veterans have been socialized into a military culture that is very different from the culture of higher education. They may therefore confront role incongruities as a result of the vast differences between "military and academic life, the incompatibilities of lingering stress and anxiety with returning to college, and enacting aspects of the student role during deployment and aspects of the military role during college" (Rumann and Hamrick 2010, 440). In a study conducted by Zinger and Cohen (2010), a student veteran describes his metamorphosis upon returning from Iraq:

> *That person was still inside me and that's what I had to deal with. I felt like I could snap in a second and the idea of killing someone who angered me wasn't far removed. You can't just switch this off. Going to a counselor helped because I came to realize that I can't go back to who I was before the war* (p. 44).

Rumann and Hamrick (2010) found that returning veteran students had difficulty reestablishing previous relationships after their deployment. As continuously enrolled students move on to junior and senior level classes, the disruption that results from being called to active duty leads some student veterans to feel isolated upon their return. This sense of isolation may be compounded by the fact that many veterans feel comfortable discussing military experiences only with other veterans. In previous years it has been difficult to establish a community of veterans on campus because veteran status was not identified upon admission or readmission. Recently institutions have become more diligent in identifying veteran status, which will assist campus administrators in disseminating information about services and events and in creating vibrant campus communities that are inclusive of veterans and offer non-veterans opportunities to benefit from this group's unique experiences.

Whether entering higher education for the first time or returning after military deployment, student veterans face a number of challenges relative to identity. They may feel disoriented by the loss of their military identity and of the camaraderie that accompanies military service. "Former military personnel report feeling not just disoriented,

but deeply alienated from the rest of America; not just sad over the loss of friendships, but devastated over the loss of brothers and sisters; not just a temporary destabilizing of identity, but a complete identity crisis" (Lighthall 2012, 82). Moreover, while student affairs professionals may stand ready and willing to help, for student veterans the fear of judgment, the drive to be independent, and the perception that only other veterans can understand their experience creates a barrier that is difficult to penetrate. As one student veteran noted:

> *The most difficult part of readjustment is the misconceptions people have of me being a muscle head, stupid or violent. This is extremely opposite of myself. I don't know who to trust, who to have as friends. The camaraderie I experienced in the Marines is difficult to find in civilian life* (Zinger and Cohen 1012, p. 44).

Veteran students may also feel isolated due to their greater maturity in comparison with that of their peers. Frequently veteran students are emotionally mature, goal-oriented, mission-driven, experienced leaders who work tirelessly to achieve their goals (Lighthall 2012). As one student veteran notes:

> *I always used to joke around like I'm the old married person in class, you know, and 24 is not old but 18-year-olds think 24 is old. So I think maybe the age gap and maybe in a lot of aspects the maturity gap is a little different. I don't know that it actually made it harder; I think because I had all of those experiences and stuff, when I came back to school I was way more focused and maybe disciplined about what I was doing. So like all of my friends were like, "I don't understand how you're making such good grades; this is so hard." It was just a difference in I guess maturity of like priorities maybe. So I think it actually kind of clarified my priorities by them pulling me out of school* (Parks, Pikowsky, and Hayes 2013, p. 2).

Recent research (Cook and Kim 2009; Persky and Oliver 2011; Van Dusen 2011) highlights the importance of raising awareness of veteran students' unique concerns and the need for leadership in this area. Veterans' affairs staff members and counselors should be trained to provide personalized, holistic assistance to student veterans rather than following general guidelines. Institutions must also train veteran-friendly mentors across campus to serve as student advocates and to direct students to appropriate services, including such resources as the registrar's office, financial aid, counseling services, the bursar's office, student affairs, and disability services (DiRamio *et al.* 2008). In addition to providing such one-on-one support, creating organizations on campus that bring veterans together and facilitate interaction between veterans and non-veterans would benefit the entire campus community while raising awareness of and support for this non-traditional population.

Support Strategies from the Office of the Registrar

On many college campuses, the registrar's office is responsible for certifying VA educational benefits, placing this office in a unique position to advocate for veteran-friendly academic policies. One such policy is providing alternative grade categories for service members called to active duty. While most institutions grant students permission to withdraw if called to active duty, fewer have grade designations that indicate the student withdrew for non-academic reasons beyond their control. Grades such as "MW" or "WM" to indicate a military withdrawal convey helpful information on a student's academic transcript, in contrast to the standard, non-specific "W" (withdrawal) grade. Additionally, some registrar's offices serve a liaison role between students and faculty, sending letters at the students' request to notify their instructors that a student is currently on active military duty and may be called to mandatory service at any time. Such designations notify the faculty member of potential hardships that may arise during the semester, at the same time encouraging them to recognize the unique challenges encountered by student veterans. With such advance notification, some faculty may be willing to support students who do get called to active service by assisting them with course completion.

When students are deployed or otherwise called to mandatory service, they often rely on the registrar's office to help them navigate university policy as it relates to completing course requirements. Registrar's office officials may step in to work with faculty and staff in arranging accommodations that allow students to meet academic requirements when they are called away suddenly. Such accommodations may include rescheduling examinations and class assignments, working with faculty to issue "I" (incomplete) or "MW" (military withdrawal) grades, or

reporting the deployment to other offices, such as financial aid and the bursar's office, so appropriate action can be taken. These accommodations may ultimately increase retention rates of student veterans.

The registrar's office can also signal its support for veterans by supporting campus ROTC programs. Particularly at the time of commissioning at graduation, the academic calendar that establishes the date grades are due may not be consistent with the date the military branch needs to confirm final grades and completion of degree requirements. Registrar's offices can aid in this process and send a positive message to the campus community by helping candidates gather grades and final confirmation of degree requirements, even when the military deadline does not correspond with the institution's academic calendar. Although this is not specifically a veteran's issue, it represents another way in which a university office can signal support for military students.

Finally, registrar's offices are frequently asked to provide priority registration for student veterans, as well as to embrace ACE recommended guidelines for accepting and processing transfer credit. Registrar's offices and admissions offices are encouraged to work together to prioritize the processing of student veteran applications, which may have transfer credit from multiple institutions as a result of the transient nature of student veterans' role while on active duty.

Support Strategies from the Office of Financial Aid

Financial aid officials play a crucial role in fostering the success of student veterans. They are responsible for certifying veterans' benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Yellow Ribbon Program, and they may manage institutional scholarships available exclusively to military service members. Many financial aid offices have dedicated counselors assigned to work with student veterans to help ease their transition into college. These counselors also serve as subject matter experts for the Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students (HEROES) Act of 2003, which is intended to ensure that service members who receive federal student aid are not adversely affected because of their military status and to minimize the administrative burdens. The Act gives financial aid offices the ability to waive or modify a number of regulations related to student financial aid, among them substituting estimated award year income information, choosing the method of determining financial need that is most beneficial for student veterans and their families, waiving the Return of Title IV Funds policy requiring that grant overpayments be repaid when a student withdraws from college, and waiving satisfactory academic progress (SAP) requirements.

Additionally, financial aid offices can work to ensure the use of the new Financial Aid Shopping Sheet. In 2012, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan wrote an open letter to college presidents asking for voluntary adoption of the Financial Aid Shopping Sheet, a consumer tool designed to simplify information about college costs and financial aid to help prospective students make informed decisions about college. The use of the Shopping Sheet not only forces transparency regarding institutional costs and the aid available to student veterans and others, but also helps simplify the financial aid process for student veterans (U.S. Department of Education 2013).

Support Strategies from the Office of Admissions

Though often overlooked in discussions of student veterans, university admissions offices play a key role in recruiting this student population. Some institutions waive certain admissions criteria for veterans who are eligible for GI Bill benefits and who have received a discharge for any reason other than dishonorable. Admissions offices may also conduct an "abbreviated readmission" after student veterans have been deployed. Some state and institutional policies also allow student veterans who return to campus to pay the tuition rate effective in the last term they were enrolled prior to deployment. Coordination between admissions, financial aid, the bursar's office, and the registrar's office is crucial to ensure that all available benefits are provided to ease the transition to college and to increase the overall graduation rates of student veterans.

Integrating and Normalizing the Student Veteran

Social support that connects student veterans with one another is often a key to helping them adjust to the college environment (Stalides 2008). Such support may be provided by a Veterans' Resource Center, a student veterans organization, or ex-military staff and faculty serving as mentors. However, because student veterans represent a diverse group of students with a broad array of experiences,

not all students will welcome the opportunity to socialize with other veterans, and many may seek to assimilate into the dominant student population. Some student veterans adopt a socialization strategy of just "blending in." As one student veteran noted, "I don't like to give the jarhead appearance, because I am in college here and I want to be a college student." When peers do learn about their wartime service, awkward questions often arise. For example, as one student veteran reports, "They always end up asking me whether I killed somebody over there or not. That's the question I don't like people asking me, but of course, my answer's 'no.' And I probably wouldn't tell them if I did" (DiRamio *et al*. 2008, p. 88).

Counselors, administrators, and student affairs professionals must be wary of a one-size-fits-all approach in addressing the needs of student veterans. Service members experience varying levels of acculturation and displacement when they deploy and subsequently return home—sometimes multiple times—and when they ultimately leave the military (Danish and Antonides 2009).

It is notable that upon returning from a wartime deployment, some service members express a preference for returning to a combat environment. Yet such a preference indicates a desire to remain with those one has become closest to, those who best understand one's experiences. As one student veteran noted:

> *When I graduated from Junior College I started at the university in the fall of 2008 and that was my first semester here, and then during that semester, just like my semester at Junior College, my unit got activated. Because I had had enough school, they can write you a waiver I guess. And now this is something I've never told my parents either, this is something that I never told my family. This is something that I haven't really told very many people, but I had enough school where they would write me a waiver where I didn't have to go to Afghanistan. I could stay here and go to school.*
>
> *So they said all right, so my team, my squad leader was like all right, we're going to get you that letter and you can stay here and you don't have to worry about going. At the very first thought of that I thought, "Yes, I don't have to go to Afghanistan!" And then after like, not even a day I felt terrible, I felt horrible. I felt like I was betraying my friends, my, the guys, because a lot of these guys I had gone to Iraq with and I felt bad. I felt like I was, I mean, I knew guys that have wives, kids and all that, and you don't get a waiver because you've got a wife and kids. Why should I get a waiver because I went to college? So I turned down my waiver and I left the University anyway even though I had finished that first semester. I was able to get done with that semester, but then I withdrew from school anyway and I went, I went anyway. I didn't take the waiver or anything. So, I left fall of 2008, that was the first semester and the one semester before, and then we left for training and then we all went to Afghanistan...for a year* (Parks, Pikowsky, and Hayes 2013, p. 10).

Transitioning home from wartime or other military service does not represent simply a change of one's job or location; it represents a wholesale culture change.

In addition, the prevalence of PTSD, TBI, or other disabilities among military personnel should not be overstated, as well as assumptions that all veterans have difficulty transitioning. The overarching goal of all institutions of higher education must be to provide robust levels of services to student veterans, to educate constituencies about this population's unique needs, and to avoid blanket policies based on overgeneralizations or stereotypes.

Ongoing Support through Degree Completion

Academic advising plays an important role in promoting veteran students' success in postsecondary institutions. Veteran students with strong connections to academic advising report greater overall satisfaction with their school and demonstrate higher levels of academic success (Wheeler 2012). Advising is one of the key areas in which veteran students can form positive and lasting relationships with school officials who support their academic and personal development (King and Kerr 2005). Consequently, advising offers one of the most promising avenues for enhancing student veterans' academic performance and increasing their historically low retention and graduation rates. Seasoned academic advisors who possess a heightened awareness of course content and a sensitivity to campus culture are particularly helpful in working with the needs of this population.

Academic advising is provided through numerous systems that vary from one institution to another. Some colleges and universities house centers for academic advising that provide "one-stop shops," often serving students in

their first year or two of college prior to formally entering a major. Such centers should review the services provided for and approaches taken with student veterans, making any changes that might be beneficial. Such centers can also use assessment tools such as surveys to elicit feedback on their services from this and other specific populations.

At institutions without a central advising office, leaders in the veterans' services area or the registrar's office should work with individual academic units on best practices for advising this student population. For example, in some situations a change of major or academic focus can impact retention. If the student is unlikely to complete a degree due to deployment, it could be suggested that the student complete a certificate, which might provide motivation to return for a degree in the future. Such questions may be helpful in improving the retention and graduation of student veterans.

Advisors who are intimately familiar with the faculty provide an important resource for student veterans. Student veterans often hold strong opinions about the wars in which they served and about military geopolitics in general. Thus, matching them with professors who are open to these philosophies may improve graduation rates. As one student veteran explained:

> *I was taking a sociology class this summer where [the professor] basically referred to the American soldier as a terrorist. Those were his own words. And the military is wrong. I think I failed the class because I refused to take his final exam. Because he was wording a question, he was making a theory of his as a question and turning it into fact and wanting me to agree with it by writing down what's right and wrong about the statement. And I refused to answer it* (DiRamio et al. 2008, p. 89).

This example highlights the benefit of academic advisors being familiar with faculty and course content, which can inform their discussions with student veterans.

To adequately serve student veterans, academic advisors must be aware of institutional policy regarding military transcripts and be willing to advocate for ACE recommended credit for student veterans when appropriate. Advisors should also have a thorough knowledge of policies concerning university withdrawal when a student veteran is called to active duty, and of the requirements for maintaining educational benefits. On an individual level, advisors must be able to recognize when student veterans are struggling and to help those students access the resources they need. Advisors are encouraged to partner with student services offices to better understand the challenges student veterans face and to develop creative ways to keep student veterans enrolled and advancing toward their degree objective.

Findings from Rumann and Hamrick's (2010) work suggest that student veterans engage in self-reflection on and redefinition of their own identities, prompted by the perception that in important ways, they are not the same person they were prior to deployment. Academic advisors are in a unique position to assist student veterans through their transition from service member to college student (Branker 2009). Academic advisors need to be more proactive than just putting student veterans into classes; they need to actively plan out which classes would be best for these students, especially disabled student veterans (Branker 2009).

Service members returning from deployment may experience a range of problems including difficulty sleeping, strong reactions to loud noises, anger, excessive drinking, flashbacks to casualty situations, and anxiety (Hosek *et al.* 2006). Academic advisors who recognize these symptoms can guide student veterans to appropriate campus services. Advisors may be able to assist student veterans in overcoming the tendency to avoid asking for or accepting help, based in part on the stigma attached to receiving counseling (Hosek *et al.* 2006). Recognizing the unique needs of and challenges faced by veterans and developing supportive and trusting relationships between student veterans and advisors can go a long way in promoting student veterans' academic success.

Current On-Campus Trends in Veteran Support Services

One of the biggest advances in campus support for student veterans has been the growth of veterans' resource centers. These centralized resource hubs focus on providing a supportive environment that assists student veterans in achieving their educational and career goals. Resource centers provide academic support services, peer counseling, culturally relevant support programs, outreach, student veterans' clubs, wellness activities, instruction in fundamental college skills, and sensitivity training for

campus offices regarding veterans' issues. These centers frequently employ personnel who either have a military background themselves or have extensive experience working with student veterans.

Additionally, many schools use VA work-study students to help manage rising workloads related to increases in student veteran enrollment. The VA work-study program is available to individuals on active or reserve training status on a full-time or three-quarter time basis under programs including the Post-9/11 GI Bill, Montgomery GI Bill, VA Reserve Education Assistance Program, Post-Vietnam Era Veterans Educational Assistance Program, Dependents' Educational Assistance Program, 38 USC Chapter 35, National Call to Service Participants, and Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program. The VA selects each student for the work-study program based on the student's ability to complete the work-study contract before the end of the benefit period and based on job availability within normal commuting distance for the student. The number of applicants selected depends on the availability of VA-related work at the student's institution. Services performed under the VA work-study program must be related to VA work. VA work-study students are ideal employees for veterans' resource centers and may play a key role in helping new student veterans integrate or reintegrate into the higher education environment.

COMBAT STRESS AND THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The cumulative impact of combat stress on an individual's ability to learn in an academic environment cannot be overstated. While most soldiers cope with some degree of combat stress, some return home with ongoing problems such as PTSD, depression, anxiety, aggressive behavior, insomnia, or reduced memory and concentration skills (Moore and Penk 2011). The frequency of military service member deployment has increased in the past decade, with a growing number of troops serving more than one tour in a combat zone. Almost a quarter of a million soldiers have been deployed twice to either Iraq or Afghanistan (Buckholtz 2009), giving rise to increased incidences of combat stress (Thompson 2007). The stressors associated with multiple deployments are thus risk factors for psychological concerns for student veterans.

A Rand Corporation study found that 26 percent of returning veterans may have mental health issues and that over 200,000 veterans from the current conflicts have applied for VA disability benefits, with 47 percent of those reporting some form of mental illness (*The Do Not Call List* 2007). Moreover, Kaplan (2008) reports that 70 percent of soldiers and veterans will not seek help from federal agencies such as the Department of Defense and Veterans Administration, placing an undue strain on private facilities and practitioners, including on-campus counseling centers and other campus resources. Whether it's the stigma associated with seeking treatment related to military culture of toughness, or the fear of being kicked out of active duty or reserve status, statistics show that many student veterans do not take advantage of the mental health benefits available to them.

Shea (2010) identified five areas in which combat stress may impact student veterans in the academic environment: academic stress, sleeplessness and concentration issues, alcohol use, flashbacks, and dual enrollment.

- **Academic Stress.** Whether in writing papers or taking exams, socialization into the academic environment can be challenging for student veterans; for some, the process may take months or even years. Student veterans may encounter difficulty in communicating with other students as a result of their socialization in a military setting, where expectations are vastly different from those of the college classroom.
- **Sleeplessness and Lack of Concentration.** While students in all categories may experience sleeplessness and lack of concentration, some student veterans report significant challenges related to lack of sleep and concentration in class (Shea and Fishback 2012). Sleep problems may be the result of a traumatic experience or stressful event, or negative thoughts or anxiety may make it hard to fall asleep or cause student veterans to wake up frequently during the night. Student veterans may dread having nightmares or find their thoughts focused on the challenges that lie ahead.
- **Alcohol Use.** One of the frequent side effects of soldiers returning from combat is the increased use of alcohol. On most college campuses alcohol is easy to obtain, and student veterans may find that drinking helps them forget experiences they prefer not to remember. As one student noted, "I probably drank more when I got back. It helps me relax. I forgot about things. I mean, it takes your mind off of thinking" (Shea and Fishback 2012,

57). Another student veteran explained, "I can't sleep. It's just one way to kind of numb out" (Canon 2009, A10). Increased alcohol use often becomes an exacerbating factor that hinders students' academic success.

- **Flashbacks.** A flashback occurs when an individual feels as though they are re-experiencing a traumatic event. During this process they essentially relive the event, recalling sights, sounds, smells, and other details and often experiencing the same physical or emotional responses they had at the time of the event. Flashbacks have unpredictable triggers: an image shown in class, a conversation with an instructor or peer, or a vast variety of other sources may trigger a flashback. In my own experience, while teaching an Introductory Sociology class, I showed a clip from a documentary called *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib* (2007). At the end of class a student veteran approached me and said, "I was there; I served in Abu Ghraib during my deployment to Iraq." The student reported that he had flashbacks from seeing the images of the prison, memories he was trying desperately to forget.

At times, the curriculum alone may mentally transport student veterans back to Iraq and Afghanistan, and in those moments it may be impossible for them to focus on classroom material. After talking with my student I became much more conscious of the media I use in class and try to avoid using material that may trigger flashbacks for student veterans. Another faculty member related a similar learning experience:

> *I showed a clip from Saving Private Ryan. One student became so emotionally distraught that he left the classroom. He was unable to gather himself and continue to perform, and it was almost a flashback for him [of] a soldier that he had lost while in command* (Shea and Fishback 2012, p. 58).

- **Dual Enrollment.** Finally, student veterans may feel increased academic stress when they attend military training programs while they are simultaneously enrolled in college classes, whether online or in brick-and-mortar classroom settings. Dual enrollment requires a significant investment of time, money, work, and personal commitment. The additional homework may also come at a price to student veterans' families, especially those who long for more time together following deployment.

Institutional Response

Cook and Young (2009) have identified five areas of focus for institutional leadership in enhancing services to student veterans: financial matters, administrative and strategic planning, psychological counseling, advising and career services, and creating on-campus veterans' offices. While some institutions have made great strides in providing services to student veterans, many others are just beginning to create programs and may lack the resources required to serve a large influx of student veterans.

Additionally, working with student veterans experiencing PTSD and TBI requires specialized experience. Campus counselors may have little experience working with student veterans returning from combat. Thus, schools may need to network with community resources to provide effective services to veterans who suffer from combat-related stress. The campus community must also be aware that student veterans may be reluctant to seek counseling because of the stigma of receiving this type of assistance. Reflecting on my own experiences in the military, I remember those in power referencing the "sick, lame, and lazy," when discussing any military member requesting counseling or medical assistance. Needless to say, that stigma is very difficult to overcome even after leaving military service. One way to encourage student veterans to access services is to create a veterans support group to help distribute information about the services and opportunities offered on campus. Support group members can then discuss the stereotypes openly as a way of normalizing the behavior rather than student veterans internalizing stigmas.

In 2011 Eric Shenseki, the secretary of Veteran Affairs, stated that more than 500,000 student veterans had enrolled in the nation's institutions (Shea and Fishback 2012). Educators must be prepared for the academic, financial, and personal impact on the campus community of this influx. The success and retention of student veterans depends on their ability to integrate or reintegrate into the higher education community, and everyone in this community shares the responsibility of assisting them in this process.

One of the most important elements of this work is to build rapport and develop relationships with student veterans, and to convey that they are welcome on campus and that resources are available to serve their needs. Higher education professionals must acknowledge the presence of

student veterans in their classrooms and recognize any need these students have for accommodations. Overall, student veterans want to feel included in the campus community, but may be hesitant to be the first to reach out for help.

SERVING STUDENT VETERANS WITH DISABILITIES

The number of veterans with disabilities has increased in recent years due to the prevalence of psychological disorders resulting from the stress and trauma of combat deployment. To serve student veterans, advisors must therefore be mindful of the complex psychosocial issues that are unique to this population. In order to better serve them, it is important for administrators and advisors to be knowledgeable of the possibilities that can be offered on-campus as well as off-campus.

The Department of Defense (DoD), the Veterans Health Administration (VA), and a number of private organizations, combined with family and peer support, provide significant assistance for veterans with disabilities. These organizations can benefit students, but only if the students are informed of the possibilities and helped through these processes by university/college administrators.

The Department of Defense attempts to prepare soldiers psychologically as well as physically before they leave for deployment to reduce the likelihood of psychological problems; in addition, it provides psychological services for soldiers during deployment, and supports and conducts research to develop effective therapies and treatments (National Council on Disability 2009).

The VA's resources for veterans include outreach programs; PTSD services; and research on the effects of war and on stress, trauma, and the causes and possible treatments for PTSD, among other services. Some private organizations, such as the ACE, also provide assistance for veterans in coping with disabilities, returning to civilian life, and pursuing higher education. All of these organizations can be vital to a veteran, and even more helpful to those attempting to further their education. Many financial, therapy, and counseling services can be offered through these organizations.

Family and peer support are two of the most important components in helping veterans with disabilities (National Council on Disability 2009). Peer support, especially from peers who are also veterans or who have experienced similar problems or disabilities, can be instrumental in providing both practical information and emotional support. Family and peers' knowledge of the individual enables them to offer a deeper understanding and more individualized support than can groups such as the VA, DoD, or private organizations. The needs and concerns of disabled veteran students must be taken into account when creating academic, psychological, financial, and social support structures for student veterans at colleges and universities.

Like many students with a physical or psychological disability, student veterans tend not to disclose their disabilities freely (Shackelford 2009). Veterans as a group are less inclined to seek help than other populations, and veterans with disabilities may grapple with seeing themselves as disabled or struggling to perform (Burnett and Segoria 2009). Additionally, some service members fear that identification or treatment of psychological disabilities could impact future background checks and security clearances, particularly if they are pursuing a career in law enforcement.

Many veterans also resist identifying themselves as disabled because they equate such an identity with weakness. The military ethos is one of strength and power, which is a necessity for members of a fighting force. Church (2009) characterizes the culture of warriors—referring to both active soldiers and veterans—as one of fierce loyalty and commitment, with a tradition of not dwelling on problems or injuries. Within this cultural context, it is challenging yet vital for universities to help disabled student veterans become comfortable disclosing their disabilities. Shackelford (2009) noted that it is critical for faculty and staff to recognize that disabled student veterans who do not self-identify as disabled are not doing so to cause problems for themselves or deceive the institution. A lack of understanding of student veterans' concerns and motivations may hinder institutions from providing appropriate support services and creating a welcoming environment for veterans.

Common Support Services

In a survey of disability services offices at 237 U.S. institutions of higher education, Vance and Miller (2009) found that psychological disabilities accounted for the highest percentage of disabilities among the student population they served; with the other disabilities being identified as burned, deaf-blind, hard-of-hearing, health-medical, learning disability, mobility, sexual assault, speech-language disability, and visual impairment. Of students in-

dicating psychological or emotional disability, 34 percent of male clients and 11 percent of female clients identified psychological difficulties as their reason for seeking accommodations. The same survey showed that only a third of the institutions' disability services intake forms asked about veteran status. Moreover, the majority of disabled student veterans in the study were referred to offices other than disability services, some located more than fifty miles off-campus. Many of these services were for psychometric testing or veteran support or counseling services. If there are many disabled veterans attending universities and colleges, on-campus support that is specific to these students is highly recommended.

Common campus support services available to disabled student veterans include counseling, alternative courses or class times, curriculum adjustments or waivers, disability rights (*i.e.* determining how ADA qualifications compare to military disability qualifications and advocating for more disability support for veterans), psychometric testing, special materials, physical and psychological therapy, and various veterans' services geared toward peer support and financial aid (Vance and Miller 2009). Many institutions also offer accommodations for physical injuries, welcoming programs, and transportation to VA medical facilities, and seek to instill in their faculty and staff an understanding of potential barriers veteran students face (Church 2009). Peer counseling or peer mentoring programs are among the most effective support services for veterans (Church 2009), as student veterans are often more receptive to and comfortable with assistance offered by peers, in particular veteran student peers.

Changing Disability Models

The services discussed above are traditional institutional resources that serve disabled veteran students. However, many of these services have not been adapted in recent years to accommodate the influx of veterans returning to college after military deployment.

In 2006, the Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law published an article calling for improved campus services for students with mental disabilities. In the enhanced disability model the article proposed, colleges and universities would:

- Encourage students to seek counseling for mental health problems;
- Build on the principle of "scaffolding" by providing understanding of and encouragement for those facing mental illness and teaching students coping skills;
- Foster understanding of the needs of students in crisis, and
- Provide more and easier access to counseling.

Changes to the GI Educational Bill have increased veterans' educational benefits, and amendments to the Americans with Disabilities Act changed the defining characteristics for veterans to broader terms in order to better accommodate the growing number of psychological injuries (Church 2009). This benefits student veterans with PTSD or another psychological injury from combat by allowing them more access to disability benefits. Moreover, disability models continue to change, and many institutions have developed services for veteran disabilities that have proven successful in recent years. For example, the Lumina Foundation (2013) found that student veterans benefit greatly from college veterans' centers that provide veteran student mentors to assist new students. Discussing two student veterans' experiences, it notes:

> *In many ways, Randle and Standage got through college the hard way. Prior to 2008, the University of Arizona had no programs for promoting veterans' success. Since then, it has advanced toward President Shelton's goal of becoming the most veteran-friendly university in the country. The university created the VETS program, which draws on assets from across campus to support men and women who served in the military. You'll find stalwart supporters of veterans in the Registrar's Office and the Offices of Admissions and Financial Aid. They show up at the Disability Resource Center and at Health Services. Student veterans call them "friendlies." "Parts of this campus are incredibly helpful," says Randle. "Parts are less aware of the help they could give."* (Lumina Foundation 2013, p. 10)

Like the University of Arizona, institutions of higher education across the country must adapt their disability models to meet the needs of the many veterans returning to college.

New Issues for Disability Services Offices

The increasing number of veterans seeking higher education upon returning from deployment has created a num-

ber of new issues for disability services offices. While the incidence of PTSD and TBI among this population has increased, research on effective treatments is still relatively young. Due to individual differences in responses to various stressors and traumas, it is impossible to predict or generalize how veterans will react to or cope with disabilities, or how those disabilities will influence their performance in an academic setting. As a result, disability services staff must be trained in a broad range of strategies and approaches for assisting this diverse population. Vance and Miller (2009) note that disability services should tackle this issue by collaborating with various offices. For example, by collaborating with a veterans' center on or off campus, disability services personnel can improve their understanding of the characteristics of student veterans with disabilities and develop effective services to meet their needs.

Because disabled student veterans are often hesitant to disclose their status as veterans and as disabled, Shackelford (2009) stated that disability services offices must be intentional in creating a welcoming and understanding environment, be knowledgeable about the VA health benefits available to student veterans, and find ways to establish rapport with student veterans, such as creating a veterans' support group or guiding students to administrators or faculty members who were veterans themselves.

Serving disabled student veterans requires understanding the unique perspectives and experiences of this population, which are far removed from those of most civilians. Bridging this gap is an ongoing challenge for colleges and universities seeking to address the needs of disabled student veterans (ACE 2010). One marine, Staff Sergeant G. (2013) described how he and other veterans would like to be interacted with by administrators, "They can't treat veterans like the everyday student, because they aren't. We've seen things and been through things that everyone else hasn't. I would say just take a mature approach, they are more mature [than other students] and should be treated that way."

There are many aspects of a soldier's life that result in a difficulty for them when returning to civilian life. Unfortunately, many student veterans have further complications due to disabilities. Student veterans are already different from traditional students, they have experienced things that many of the other students, as well as faculty and staff members, will understand. It will be important for supporting staff members of institutions to understand this difference, embrace flexibility, and be generally supportive of these disabled student veterans who have lived a different life than many people in the United States.

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HIGHER EDUCATION ACCREDITATION: HOW IT'S CHANGING, WHY IT MUST

GASTON, P. L. 2014. STERLING, VA: STYLUS PUBLISHING. 253 PP.
Reviewed by Matthew Fifolt, Ph.D.

Higher education in the United States is in a state of transition (Brown *et al.* 2012). While some have advocated for radical reforms to core functions of the system (Carey 2010, Samuels 2013), Gaston proposes that more nuanced changes from within the academy, through meaningful and responsive peer review—based accreditation, are warranted. Specifically, the author suggests that the following three assumptions undergird the current work of accrediting organizations in the United States:

- The accreditation process for higher education institutions has adapted in significant ways in response to changing circumstances and, as a result, largely succeeds in accomplishing its critical, complex missions.
- Those involved in the accreditation process should pursue opportunities to become even more effective and accountable.
- Needed reforms to the accreditation process may be accomplished at least in part through a strategy that acknowledges and improves upon present structures, principles, and protocols (Gaston 2014, p. 2).

Eduardo Ochoa, former secretary for postsecondary education in the Obama administration, notes in the preface that revitalizing the accreditation process would enable education leaders to articulate a shared vision for the U.S. higher education system: "Without such a vision, the issues will be framed by others who are less well-informed, and the policy consequences will be—as they have been—unfortunate" (Gaston 2014, p. x).

However, to move toward this outcome and remain relevant in the broadening landscape of options in higher education, the current accreditation model would need to reflect greater transparency, increased accountability, and improved effectiveness. Notwithstanding, Gaston notes that measures of accountability and effectiveness have been transforming accrediting organizations for the past two decades. Further, Eaton (2012), president of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), maintains that accreditation in the United States—now more than ever—continues to uphold the dual goals of quality assurance and quality improvement.

ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Gaston affirms that the accreditation process ensures that U.S. higher education institutions meet acceptable levels of quality. Over time, accreditation has assumed additional

roles that have enabled students to transfer credits between institutions and that have fostered greater public confidence (*e.g.*, reconciling affordability with student outcomes). However, perhaps the greatest role of higher education accreditation—and, notably, the current source of controversy—is its regulation of access to federal and state funds. While responsibility for education in the United States is constitutionally reserved to states and municipalities (Gaston 2014, 17), Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 states that students are eligible for federal financial aid only if the programs and institutions in which they are enrolled are accredited by an authorized accrediting organization.

To officially accredit programs and institutions, an organization must first be recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDE), the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), or both. Although their criteria differ slightly, both USDE and CHEA

- Determine whether an institution or program offers academic quality;
- Ensure that accurate information is made available to the public;
- Encourage programs and institutions to develop and pursue their own approaches to continuous improvement; and
- Affirm that an institution or program has sufficient stability to meet the expectations of present and future students (Gaston 2014, p. 16).

Accreditation by an approved accrediting organization ensures that higher education institutions maintain credibility that is based upon a rigorous curriculum, qualified and engaged faculty, strategic operations, and values-driven initiatives (p. 29). Gaston (2014) observes that the decision to uphold or deny accreditation can affect both student and institutional outcomes (*e.g.*, student admission to graduate school and licensure or credentialing of programs and students); therefore, accrediting or reaffirming accreditation of an institution of higher education is a serious responsibility. At the same time, the accreditation process is not focused solely on detecting institutional shortfalls but also on identifying "successful innovations, exemplary process, and exceptional accomplishments" (p. 40) that may be shared among peer institutions, thereby strengthening the field of higher education overall.

ACCREDITORS ACROSS SECTORS

At present, there are three different sectors or models of accreditation for U.S. higher education institutions: regional accreditation, national accreditation, and specialized accreditation. Regional accreditation tends to be the most recognized form of accreditation. National accreditation typically is associated with career-focused and for-profit as well as faith-based institutions. Specialized accreditation is reserved for discipline-specific programs or institutions.

Despite variations among the three models, Gaston indicates that they share the same standards and principles, such as an emphasis on program and institutional autonomy and support for a faculty-driven curriculum. In addition, all three sectors share a common belief that "heterogeneity among institutions strengthens U.S. higher education" (p. 11). This is consistent with Bok's (2013) observation that the widely varying types of institutions that comprise U.S. higher education are one of its greatest strengths.

Gaston notes that regional accrediting organizations arose primarily to serve their proximate member institutions, and they continue to reflect the values and characteristics of their constituent members. However, because communication and transportation options have rendered regional distinctions all but obsolete, Gaston suggests that there are few legitimate reasons to maintain these divisions. He writes:

> *The fairly limited range of principles, practice, and nomenclature suggests considerable common ground. What differences there are do not appear so substantive as to preclude discussion of a more fully coordinated approach, the need for which seems clearer by the day* (p. 121).

Despite the varying populations these accrediting sectors serve and the unique issues with which they grapple, Gaston concludes that accrediting organizations would be "better served if higher education accreditation were defined by its common purposes rather than by the issues that divide its various sectors" (p. 153).

ACCREDITATION ISSUES

Gaston identifies a slate of issues that accrediting organizations now face, from shifts in institutions' size and scope to the delicate balance between improvement assessments (*e.g.*, quality improvement) and those used for account-

ability (*e.g.*, quality assurance). He contends that over time, accrediting organizations have expanded traditional measures of quality and have become "more attentive to differences in institutional mission" (p. 52) in an effort to accommodate the increasingly diverse options in higher education. In fact, in response to the expansion of alternative educational models, accrediting organizations have adapted their evaluative criteria to place greater emphasis on *relative* rather than absolute standards (p. 63).

Importantly, Gaston notes that many of the concerns that have been raised both inside and outside the academy have also been discussed or addressed by accrediting organizations themselves. Topics have routinely included the increased costs of higher education, poor student outcomes, and popular alternatives to traditional modes of education (*e.g.*, online courses, competency-based instruction). Despite steps taken to resolve these issues, critics continue to question whether accreditation reforms are sufficient and timely enough to meet the needs of higher education and its increasingly "disaggregated educational opportunities" (p. 69).

PLATFORM FOR CHANGE

Gaston summarizes the key findings of five major reports that were commissioned between 2002 and 2012 and that have played an important role in shaping policies and opinions regarding the U.S. higher education accreditation system. A greater number of position papers and commentaries could have been included in his review, but Gaston selected these five specifically because they reflect "the most prominent and influential appraisals of accreditation" (p. 108). He notes that over the course of ten years, the rhetoric and tone of these reports has changed dramatically, from calls to improve the system to demands to dismantle it.

Despite critics' claims that the accreditation process is beyond salvage, Gaston suggests that many of the recommendations of the authors of these reports have overlooked the fact that accrediting organizations have already initiated reform efforts, including greater transparency (*e.g.*, Voluntary System of Accountability) and shifts from inputs (*e.g.*, numbers of books in the library) to outputs (*e.g.*, student learning outcomes). Further, Gaston regards many of the recommendations to be reasonable elements of an agenda for genuine improvement in higher education.

Among the recommendations that comprise a platform for change are the provision of more (and better) information to consumers, greater focus on academic performance, and creation of a structure that "separates the accreditor from the accredited" (p. 105). According to Gaston, critics have also advocated for more radical changes to accreditation processes, including (a) the decoupling of accreditation and student eligibility for federal financial aid, (b) a shift away from the role of quality assurance in favor of quality improvement, and (c) an expansion of options beyond the current binary system of either "accredited" or "not accredited."

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on his review of past and present accreditation efforts, Gaston identifies and groups reform efforts into six broad priorities for change. He notes that while these categories may be construed as a wide-ranging agenda, they should be seen as elements of a single, broad vision for reform of the accreditation process. Priorities include the following:

- *Coordination and Alignment:* Accrediting organizations, both within and across sectors, must move toward greater coordination of efforts and further consensus on standards and procedures.
- *Credibility:* In light of challenges within some accreditation sectors, Gaston views credibility not only as an outcome but also as a targeted objective of reform efforts. Adding more well-qualified public members to accreditation review teams may help create a more visible separation between accreditors and their member institutions.
- *Efficiency:* Gaston encourages accrediting organizations to examine processes and procedures and to identify strategies that would decrease the frequency and expense of on-site evaluations.
- *Agility and Creativity:* The author notes that accrediting organizations must anticipate and not merely respond to the accelerating evolution of higher education practice. This priority is increasing in importance as emerging technology and new methods for delivery of educational content challenge traditional notions of what constitutes a learning experience.
- *Decisiveness and Transparency:* Gaston suggests that accrediting organizations be given more authority to make evaluative judgments in shortening accreditation timeframes for institutions that exceed expectations

and to resolve inadequacies for those that fail to meet expectations. Gaston states, "Due process should embody both fairness and urgency" (p. 196). Additionally, greater transparency would allow institutions to highlight best practices through clearly stated outcomes, effective assessment, and application of assessment results to achieve improvements.

- *Shared vision:* Efforts to reform the accreditation process cannot be truly effective unless they are characterized by a shared vision that is "coherent, principled, and forward-looking" (p. 180). Gaston notes that a number of organizations are well-positioned to lead these reform efforts, but principles of change must ensure that (a) all parties have equal status in the discussions, (b) intended outcomes and timelines are clearly articulated, and (c) accrediting organizations collaborate with one another in communicating with their constituencies.

SUMMARY

Gaston describes in great detail the evolution of the U.S. higher education accreditation system and raises many important and compelling questions about how the accreditation process will need to adapt in order to respond to emerging trends. In a few places, however, the author fails to provide sufficient details. For example, Gaston introduces the topic of competency-based credentialing through direct assessment of learning as a potential replacement for the current credit-based system (Selingo 2013). But while he cites a few examples of competency-based credentialing, he does not discuss how accrediting organizations are currently responding to this emerging trend.

Further, Gaston contends that accreditation remains the "most efficient and economical means for regulating access to funding. If the accrediting community embraces the kinds of changes we have considered, it should continue to serve as gatekeeper [to federal funds]" (p. 198). The unspoken question is what if the accreditation community cannot unite to implement these changes? All of the author's recommendations—though well-intentioned and credible—rely on increased levels of cooperation and coordination among accreditation sectors that historically have remained independent of one another. Even within sectors (such as regional accrediting organizations), a fierce sense of individuality and regionalism remains. It may be in everyone's best interest to cooperate, but Gaston fails to provide persuasive evidence that a transformation of this magnitude could ever occur.

For individuals unfamiliar with accrediting organizations or the accreditation process, Gaston provides helpful background information and a broad introduction to the topic in Chapter 1. The majority of the book, however, seems better suited for individuals who either interact directly with accreditors or have responsibilities for the accreditation process at their respective institutions. Despite the author's attempts to broaden the appeal of *Higher Education Accreditation* and the potential implications of reform to the accreditation process in higher education, the topic remains highly specialized. Gaston's subject thus may have limited appeal to a broader audience.

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HOW COLLEGE WORKS

CHAMBLISS, D. F., AND C. G. TAKACS. 2014.
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Reviewed by Matthew Fifolt, Ph.D.

In *How College Works*, Chambliss and Takacs offer pragmatic solutions for institutional leaders to improve student outcomes. Their recommendations are based on ten years of research at their home institution of Hamilton College, a small, private, liberal arts institution in the northeast United States.

Despite the obvious limitations of conducting research at a "small, rich, and selective" (p. 8) college, Chambliss and Takacs preemptively note that Hamilton is anything

but the "typical" higher education institution. For example, Hamilton College enrolls approximately 1,800 residential undergraduate students, many of whom previously attended preparatory schools. Consequently, Hamilton students typically have higher test scores and greater financial resources than their peers at other institutions.

Further, the authors qualify their research findings by acknowledging that these advantages may affect their results. Regardless, they make compelling arguments for the transferability of findings based on a rigorous and multifaceted research design as well as their pursuit of practical rather than theoretical knowledge. Indeed, they argue that the depth and breadth of their investigation yielded rich data from which to draw general conclusions (p. 184).

The authors' goal for *How College Works* is to describe the characteristics of a "good" undergraduate education and to identify effective interventions that leaders can readily implement on their own campuses. Importantly, Chambliss and Takacs articulate four criteria for their recommendations to be useful across institutional settings. They must be

- *Effective*, as demonstrated in the research literature;
- *Highly leveraged*, so that a small effort produces disproportionately positive (and relatively quick) results;
- Close to *resource neutral* so as to limit expenditures of money, time, and human resources; and
- *Widely available* so that a range of leaders can utilize at least some of the recommendations (Chambliss and Takacs 2014, pp. 6–7).

Rather than searching for the "big solution," the authors state that their objective was to find "the smallest possible solutions yielding the greatest possible impact" (p. 7).

Funded by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the research was designed to be a longitudinal, multifaceted, comprehensive assessment of a liberal arts education and student outcomes at a residential college (p. 10). From the outset, the authors follow three guiding principles:

- The research is grounded by the student experience rather than the college's improvement efforts (*i.e.*, initiatives, courses, majors, activities). As such, the "student experience" was the unit of analysis;
- Primary data are collected from a statistically random sample of students;
- Multiple methods are used for data collection, with an emphasis on face-to-face interviews. Secondary data sources include enrollment and registration figures, standardized surveys, senior surveys, and more.

Based on their investigation, and supported by research literature (Bean and Eaton 2001; Tinto 2007), the authors conclude that personal relationships can have a significant impact on student success. Chambliss and Takacs summarize: "What really matters in college is who meets whom, and when" (p. 16).

STUDENT INTERACTION

To frame the discussion, the authors divide the content of this book into major milestones that students experience in college (*i.e.*, *entering, choosing, belonging, learning, finishing*). In the first section, Chambliss and Takacs identify the barriers faced and facilitators enjoyed by students beginning their college experience. The authors write:

> *Integration into the college community is crucial to a student's remaining in school, and thus for their physical and psychological availability for any kind of academic work...friendship is so strong a factor for most people as to be, for practical purposes, virtually a prerequisite for success in college* (p. 17).

Chambliss and Takacs highlight a number of different activities and settings in which students may have opportunities to connect with one another (*e.g.*, orientation programs, residence life, athletics) and observe that friendships often develop among groups that meet frequently, call upon a shared interest, and demand engagement/participation. Citing Newcomb (1966), the authors also note that chance meetings among students are most likely to occur based on institutional infrastructure that supports frequent gatherings (*i.e.*, living, dining, studying).

The authors point out that while residential living (dormitories) often provides the most frequent opportunities for informal interactions, the trend in higher education to build facilities based on what students say they *want* (*e.g.*, single rooms, private bathrooms) inhibits what students *need* (*i.e.*, occasions to interact with one another). The authors acknowledge that regardless of layout, "dorms can at least open the possibilities for extending student networks to new and even unfamiliar groups" (p. 32).

Chambliss and Takacs encourage institutional leaders to examine the student culture and the ways in which students (*i.e.*, the community of peers) interact—or fail to interact—outside of the classroom. Alumni who participated in the study recalled social aspects of college and friendships at rates far higher than they did academic learning. The authors conclude that "successfully entering a college community, in effect, makes everything else possible" (p. 39).

SENSE OF BELONGING

Beyond student persistence, Chambliss and Takacs suggest that successful integration into college life satisfies the fundamental need of students to belong. In addition to a few close friendships, the authors describe the importance of a network of acquaintances that provides interpersonal contact and general support, both of which contribute to a sense of belonging. For students, establishing a community of peers facilitates learning, fosters success, and promotes happiness and satisfaction with the college experience. Perhaps one of the most poignant statements regarding community was offered by a senior who, in retrospect, wished she had been more involved on campus. She said, "The community really doesn't exist unless you go out and become part of it" (p. 91).

The authors employ a social network analysis technique in their methodology in order to illustrate the relative position of student involvement in different types of activities on campus. Specifically, they show the interconnectedness or isolation of groups as related to the core of campus life. In a visual representation of social linkages among students, the authors show that peer writing tutors are close to the center of the social core; this is understandable given that such tutors interact with a large number of students across campus.

Other organizations, however (such as certain sports teams), are on the periphery of the diagram. According to the authors, this may be due to the significant time demands of certain sports (*e.g.*, practice time, game time, travel time) as well as team member's tendency to socialize with other team members rather than with individuals outside of their sport. Importantly, the authors note that "the [social network] diagram suggests how membership in certain activities can expand or limit student networks" (p. 94).

FACULTY INTERACTION

Chambliss and Takacs observe that some of the most consequential decisions students have to make occur early in their academic careers, when they are still relatively new to the college environment; therefore, it is incumbent upon the institution to help students make decisions in consideration of long-term outcomes (*e.g.*, life and career goals) rather than short-term gains (*e.g.*, proximity to the dining facility). Relative to this responsibility, the authors point out that some of the most influential relationships students establish in college are with members of the faculty and staff.

As with student interactions with their peers, the authors describe the potentially transformative effect of student interactions with faculty members. Intellectual, student-faculty relationships can motivate students, in turn promoting student learning. In this study, students tended to rate their "best" instructors based on the quality of student-faculty interactions. That is to say, excellent instructors were perceived as exciting, accessible, and engaged (p. 47). This is consistent with the relational model of faculty-student interactions proposed by Cox (2009) in her research on community college students.

Chambliss and Takacs further note that the most valuable relationships that students can have with faculty members are mentorships. They characterize these relationships as including frequent interactions, mutual interest, and activities that blur the distinction between professional and personal concerns. According to the authors, "such activities seem to have significant, sometimes even profound, impact" (p. 57). Students who identified with one or more mentors in college expressed higher levels of satisfaction with their academic experiences. At the very least, the authors indicate, "a personal connection with a teacher seems to encourage students, even those just trying to get by, to work harder in classes" (p. 54).

LEARNING

Once students have mastered interpersonal relationships and integrated into the college community, academic learning can begin in earnest. The authors suggest that "emotional connections to others and to a community provide the strongest motivation" for students to learn and that surprisingly simple things (*e.g.*, informal conver-

sation with a professor, a dynamic classroom presentation) can "dramatically improve that motivation" (p. 106).

As part of their investigation, Chambliss and Takacs review student experiences related to a number of academic skill sets, including writing, speaking, and critical thinking. The authors identify multiple ways in which students' skills improved as a result of attending college and provide keen insights regarding aspects of college life that challenged and motivated students to work harder. Chambliss and Takacs state:

> *Students benefit the most from teachers who are professionally competent, but more importantly, who simply pay attention, try to improve students' work, and take the time to talk with them—in a word, teachers who care about the subject and the students* (p. 131).

Students learn best when they are in a supportive community and interact with individuals who value their contributions to the learning process and who challenge them to push beyond their current levels of comfort in terms of attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge.

BENEFITS OF COLLEGE

At the end of their college experience, students are excited and anxious about transitioning into the next phase of their lives—experiencing the "real world." In a way, however, some students have already had experiences with this new reality by completing a college thesis or senior project. The authors describe these activities as opportunities for students to synthesize and apply their knowledge and skills from the previous several years in one large, capstone experience. In addition to such culminating experiences, students identified a number of benefits of attending college. Chambliss and Takacs group these into three distinct categories: (a) skills (*i.e.*, writing, speaking, critical thinking); (b) confidence; and (c) relationships.

With regard to skill development, the authors state, "The greater potential benefits of college may lie not just in learning discrete skills, but in acquiring the habits and attitudes that support learning and make it intrinsically enjoyable" (p. 140). Reflecting on the development of their confidence, alumni who participated in the study expressed a greater sense of self-efficacy as a result of their college experience. Chambliss and Takacs note that this confidence is the result of trying new things in the relatively low-risk setting of college.

The authors suggest that friendships and other relationships compel students to think about, articulate, defend, and even change their beliefs on occasion. For the students in their sample, faculty and peer relationships significantly shaped their college experiences in mostly positive ways. These are just a few of the many advantages students experience in college that Chambliss and Takacs highlight throughout the book.

SUMMARY

How College Works is an articulate and well-researched account of the undergraduate experience at a selective, residential college in the northeast United States. Despite the potential challenges of generalizing their findings to a larger audience, the authors provide useful, albeit broad, recommendations to help academic leaders improve the undergraduate college experience for students, regardless of institutional type. These proposals seem better suited, however, for traditional-aged students (between the ages of eighteen and 24 years) as compared to nontraditional-aged students. This may be an oversight by the authors, especially given the growing percentage of adult and veteran students returning to higher education (O'Herrin 2011; Ross-Gordon 2011).

The authors also provide a rich narrative regarding college student transitions, as evidenced in part by their intriguing choice of chapter headings (*e.g.*, Entering, Belonging, Finishing). Halfway through the book, however, Chambliss and Takacs inexplicably interrupt this discourse with a chapter on calculations of class size. The information in this chapter is important insofar as it demonstrates how such calculations can be false and misleading depending on the unit of analysis (*i.e.*, *classes* vs. *students*); however, its placement disrupts the otherwise compelling flow of information. Readers may have been better served had the authors dealt with this topic in an appendix.

Finally, Chambliss and Takacs make the important point that attending college is—and always has been—a very human endeavor; therefore, people matter far more than programs and policies. To improve the college experience, academic leaders should use financial and human resources to help "the right people find each other at the right time" (p. 155). Finally, the authors suggest that even

the smallest gestures from faculty and administrators (*e.g.*, knowing and using students' names) can noticeably increase student motivation and have long-term consequences for how students experience college and how alumni remember it.

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About the Author

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PRESIDENCIES DERAILED: WHY UNIVERSITY LEADERS FAIL AND HOW TO PREVENT IT

TRACHTENBERG, S. J., G. B. KAUVAR, AND E. G. BOGUE. 2013. BOSTON, MA: THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS. 163 PP.

Reviewed by Matthew Fifolt, Ph.D.

In *Presidencies Derailed*, Trachtenberg, Kauvar, and Bogue (2013) explore the involuntary departure of chief executive officers (*i.e.*, presidents and chancellors) from higher education institutions in the United States. In this context, the authors define derailment as "the termination or resignation of a president before the end of his or her first contract" (vii). According to the authors, derailments are a "waste of financial and human resources" (p. 1) and frequently create instability that adversely affects enrollment, retention, fundraising, and institutional loyalty. Additionally, derailments undermine the multiple missions of colleges and universities and erode public trust in higher education.

Trachtenberg and his colleagues identify six themes that tend to precede a presidential derailment; four are consistent with literature from the corporate sector, and two may be unique to higher education. Categorized under the three broad headings of personal shortcomings, institutional context, and board shortcomings, the six themes are:

- Poor interpersonal skills (*e.g.*, arrogant attitudes, volatile tempers, poor communication skills);
- Inability to lead constituencies (*e.g.*, difficulty building coalitions, failure to build and lead senior staff members);
- Difficulty adapting (*e.g.*, inability or unwillingness to understand the institutional context);
- Failure to meet organizational objectives (*e.g.*, goals related to budgets, fundraising, and enrollment and retention);
- Ethical lapses (*e.g.*, nepotism, mismanagement of funds, political favors); and
- Board shortcomings (*e.g.*, conflicts of interest, dysfunctional dynamics, failure to adhere to standards of good governance).

Trachtenberg and his colleagues are the primary authors of *Presidencies Derailed*, but four additional contributing authors explore these six themes as they apply to derailments at four distinct types of institutions—namely, private liberal arts institutions, public master's-level institutions, public research universities, and community colleges. Each contributor presents a total of four case studies for a total of sixteen cases. Guided by principles of qualitative research, the contributing authors assign pseudonyms to individuals and institutions to maintain confidentiality.

In addition to these case studies, Trachtenberg and his colleagues provide two firsthand accounts of presidential derailments written by the individuals who experienced them. The authors conclude their work with suggestions regarding elements of the search and selection processes, issues related to board practices and performances, and reflections on some of the realities that complicate academic presidencies (p. x).

PRIVATE LIBERAL ARTS INSTITUTIONS

In the first set of cases, Jason McNeal describes presidential derailments that occurred at four private liberal arts institutions. In this setting, presidencies were derailed by personal behaviors, skills, and abilities, as well as board shortcomings. In one case, the former president failed

to "fully disclose important information about the college to his cabinet (information they needed to manage the enterprise) or the board (information they needed to govern the enterprise)" (p. 25). In other cases, presidents lacked the ability or willingness to build strong relationships with board members, community leaders, and other constituents to overcome a variety of challenges including a stalled capital campaign, misunderstandings regarding changes in institutional direction, and political maneuvering by adversarial board members.

McNeal also highlights the tensions that occurred when one of the former president's progressive beliefs clashed with community values. He describes this executive's failure to adapt to the culture of the academic environment, even though the former president viewed it more as a "clash of worldviews" (p. 30). For McNeal, it raises the larger question of the extent to which a president should adjust his or her personal philosophy to align with the expectations of key constituents. Finally, McNeal notes that a number of the presidencies at these four private liberal arts institutions were derailed by board shortcomings, including board dysfunction, ethical lapses, and failure to follow established institutional procedures. In response to these findings, McNeal suggests a number of critical actions that presidents and board members can take to avert derailments, including improving communication, clarifying expectations, providing a unified voice on priorities, and building stronger relationships with the community (p. 34).

PUBLIC MASTER'S-LEVEL INSTITUTIONS

Julie Longmire investigates a second set of derailments—at four public master's-level institutions which she defines as "primarily regionally based state universit[ies] with a mission to educate people from the surrounding counties" (p. 35). Longmire notes that these institutions emphasize teaching rather than research and traditionally have a strong tradition of service. As at private liberal arts colleges, presidents at public master's-level institutions exhibited personal and professional failings that precipitated their early termination. Notably, three of the four presidents—including one who failed to appreciate the nature and mission of this type of regional institution (p. 37)—had difficulty adapting to the environment.

These presidents resisted the principles of shared governance and consensus-building, frequently issuing unsupported mandates and requiring blind loyalty from their subordinates. Several presidents surrounded themselves with people who "failed to question them and provided uninformed or ill-informed guidance" (p. 42), and at least one president was deemed dishonest and fiscally irresponsible by his cabinet. Longmire notes that presidents' actions were frequently inconsistent with their statements, and this damaged their credibility and ultimately led to an "erosion of campus confidence" (p. 48). She suggests that one of the common themes for these derailments was a poor "fit" between the presidents and the institutions.

PUBLIC RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

In the third set of cases, Keith Carver describes presidential derailments that occurred at four public research universities. The author notes that this type of institution typically has the largest student enrollment and the largest budgets within the higher education sector. Further, public research institutions are highly complex organizations with multiple missions, numerous stakeholder groups, and active faculty governance structures (*i.e.*, faculty senate).

Among this group of presidents who experienced derailment, two had terms that were sullied by poor ethical decisions: one had an alleged inappropriate relationship with a subordinate, and the other misused public funds to purchase personal luxury items. Two presidents' derailments were attributed to a failure to lead constituents, but all four struggled with developing and sustaining interpersonal relationships. Carver notes, "Their attitudes and styles, as well as their actions, created tension or conflict between the president and the greater university community" (p. 56).

Three of the four presidents in this set of cases also had difficulty adapting to their new institutional environments. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the case where the president moved from an administrative position at a school with approximately 1,500 students and a non-union workforce to a university of approximately 21,000 students and an active unionized workforce. Observers noted that this leader was simply overwhelmed by the responsibilities of the job from the outset of his tenure at the university.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

In the final set of cases, Leigh Ann Touzeau discusses presidential derailments in the community college setting. By design, community colleges are established to respond to the needs of the local community. Touzeau notes that none of the community college presidents was derailed by unethical or selfish behaviors. Rather, they all had difficulty collaborating with key constituencies—including micromanaging board members, powerful faculty unions, and, in one case, a contentious county commissioner who controlled a large share of funding for the institution and wielded significant influence with the board.

Touzeau identifies striking similarities between all four of the community college presidents studied. Specifically, they all followed a long-term, well-liked president; began their tenure as first-time presidents; and came to the community college from out of town. The perception of the president as an outsider was especially potent in one small, blue-collar town where one of the community colleges was located. In describing the then-new president, a former board member from this institution said, "Look at him–with those cuff links–who does he think he is?" (p. 68). According to Touzeau, the president's tendency to "dress to the nines" communicated to the campus community a sense of superiority and marked the president as both "slick" and "disingenuous."

Trouzeau notes that the community college presidents who were derailed "failed to invest in building social and political capital before taking on notable campus challenges" (p. 62). While the boards on these campuses could have been more supportive of the incoming presidents, Touzeau suggests that "[presidential] newcomers need to pay careful attention to local politics, college customs, and preexisting relationships" (p. 67). In their quest to implement needed changes, community college presidents frequently advanced agendas too quickly or without sufficient buy-in from faculty and administrators, leading ultimately to their derailments.

PERSONAL ACCOUNTS

Trachtenberg and his colleagues feature two derailment stories as expressed by the presidents who experienced them: William Frawley at the University of Mary Washington (2006–07) and Michael Garrison at West Virginia University (2007–08). Frawley's derailment was preceded by two public incidents of driving under the influence (DUI) which Frawley suggested were the result of his poor judgment and "self-medicating" for years of undiagnosed depression.

Despite his request for medical leave and his desire to continue at the university in either an administrative or faculty position, the board initially requested his resignation but ultimately decided to fire him. Upon reflection, Frawley indicated that the board "had to do what it really did not want to do" (p. 79) in response to significant pressure from major donors, political figures, and the education system. Frawley ultimately became very critical of the need to lead an institution while "under the glare of the media spotlight" (p. 91).

In contrast, Garrison described his derailment in terms of the board's inability to stand up to political pressure rather than any personal shortcomings. By his own account, Garrison was a nontraditional business- and change-oriented leader. Despite significant and positive changes that occurred within the first 100 days of his tenure, two complicated and highly publicized issues derailed his presidency. First, Garrison notoriously and successfully sued West Virginia University's former football coach to recover $4 million from the coach's buyout clause. Second, administrators granted an executive master of business administration degree to the former governor's daughter despite poor documentation of her completion of course requirements. Despite Garrison's call for an independent audit by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers and the determination that Garrison played no role in granting the degree, the board wavered in its support of him. It was the cumulative effect of these two issues that led Garrison to resign from his presidency after only one year in office.

GUIDANCE FOR PRESIDENTS AND BOARDS

The authors write, "The humanity of presidents and the humanity of board members suggest that not every derailment...is preventable. But, higher education can, should, and must do better" (p. 129). With this in mind, Trachtenberg and his colleagues provide specific recommendations for board members and new presidents that are based on their research findings and experiences in higher education as well as a thorough review of the literature on corporate derailments.

The authors' practical suggestions address many of the primary concerns raised in the case studies, including building social capital, establishing clear lines of communication, speaking with a unified voice, assessing performance, preparing for transitions, and behaving ethically. The authors acknowledge that their recommendations are neither all-or-nothing propositions nor guarantees of success. They do, however, express the hope that their research will "improve the probability of appointing and keeping [*i.e.*, retaining] presidents of academic institutions who serve with competence and integrity" (p. 139).

SUMMARY

Presidencies Derailed is a well-written and engaging investigation of leadership and interpersonal dynamics in higher education; it should appeal to a wide range of potential readers. The authors provide compelling data regarding the financial and reputational costs associated with presidential derailments as well as relevant information for board members to consider regarding the recruitment and selection of the best available presidential candidate. Specifically, Trachtenberg and colleagues note that the goal in presidential searches is not perfection in any particular candidate but rather to mitigate risk to the institution. Similarly, they strongly encourage potential applicants to carefully consider the demands of a presidency on family life and privacy.

Despite the book's strengths, there was a tremendous amount of redundancy within and across case studies, all of which resulted in one of two actions—resignation or dismissal. The authors could have increased the clarity and efficiency of their work by categorizing the case studies according to derailment theme rather than institutional type. And the two firsthand accounts of derailed presidencies, while interesting, added little to the overall discussion. Readers may have been better served had the authors linked the case studies directly to their reflections on how to reduce the likelihood of presidential derailment.

Trachtenberg and his colleagues do an excellent job of articulating the conditions that contributed to the derailments of the presidencies presented in this book. This is especially commendable given that many presidential derailments are cloaked in secrecy or protected by confidentiality agreements and thus are typically not available to the general public for analysis or discussion. The authors reiterate throughout the book that their goal in presenting these case studies is not to facilitate generalization from a given derailment but rather to "improve executive searches, leadership transitions, board [member] practices and behaviors, and board-president relations" (p. 93). College and university stakeholders would be wise to heed their advice.

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